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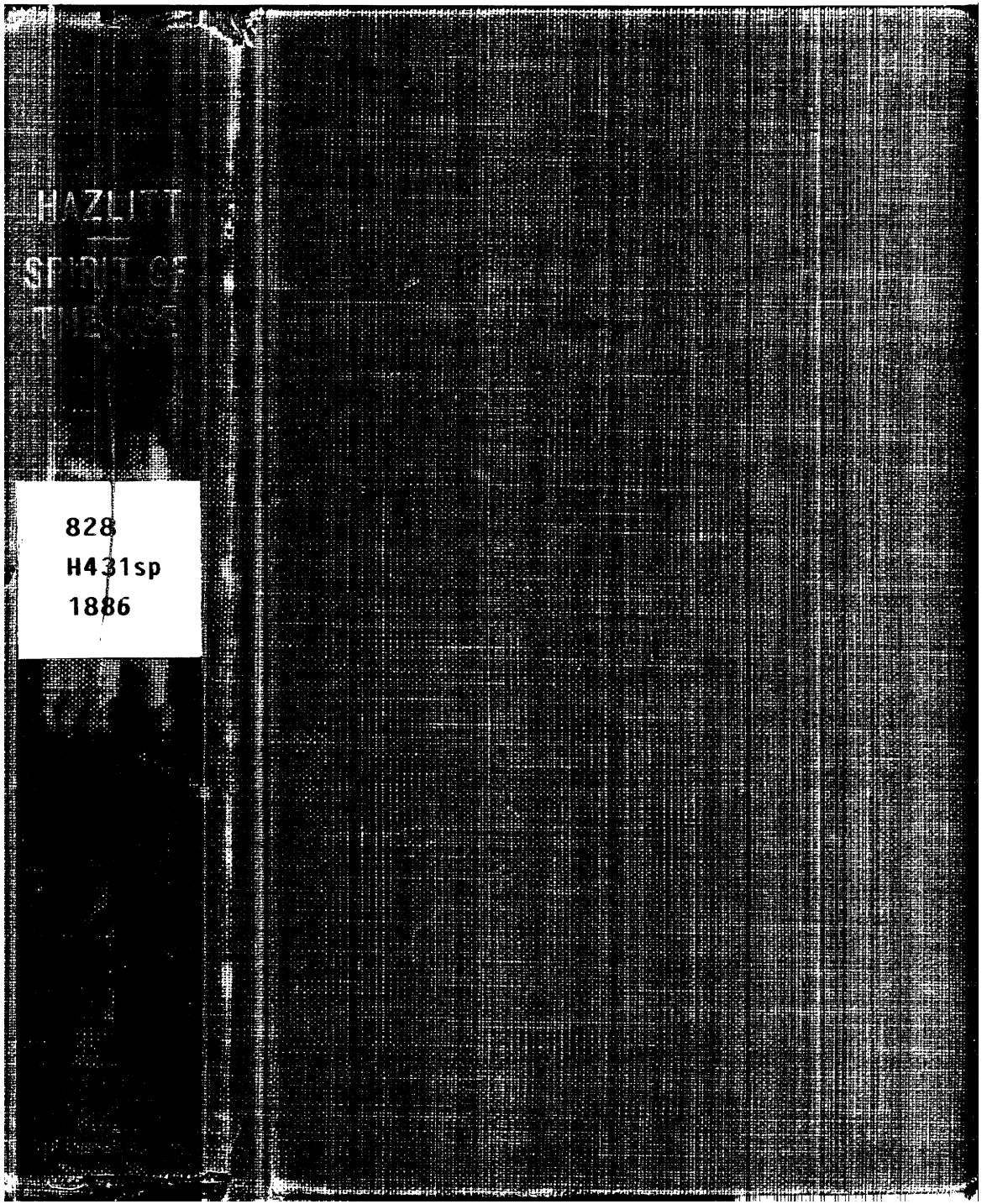
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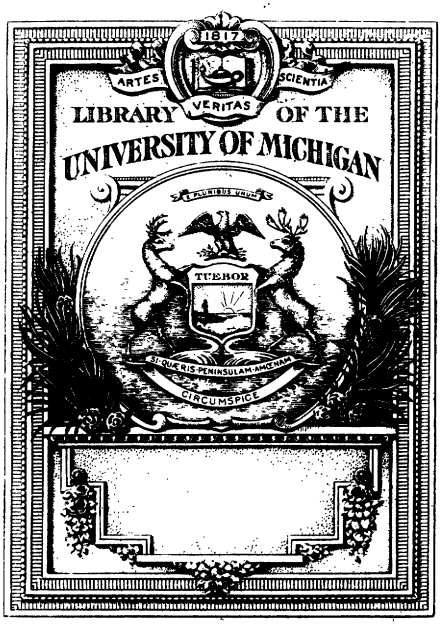
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THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

OR

CONTEMPORARY PORTRAITS

FOURTH EDITION

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

FREE THOUGHTS ON PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND A LETTER TO WILLIAM GIFFORD

BY

WILLIAM HAZLITT

EDITED BY W. CAREW HAZLITT.

LONDON: GEORGE BELL AND SONS
YORK STREET, COVENT GARDEN
1886

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PREFACE.

THE first edition of the SPIRIT OF THE AGE in book-form appeared in an octavo volume of pp. 424 in 1825. The contents had been partly communicated as separate articles to the *New Monthly Magazine*. A second edition, making only pp. 408, and printed in smaller size and type, came out in the same year. The Characters were differently arranged; an addition to that of Coleridge was made; a new one on Cobbett was first introduced; and a few errors of the press were corrected. In 1858, the author's son produced a third impression, with a criticism on Canning incorporated.

I have in my possession portions of the original autograph of this interesting work, and I have collated them, so far as they go; but the MS., while it rectifies a few mistakes here and there, exhibits (I suspect), on the whole, readings deliberately rejected by the author himself in proof. On the other hand, from a copy of the second issue of 1825, belonging to Mr. C. W. Reynell, a few verbal changes in Hazlitt's own hand have been introduced.

"When I told Jeffrey," says Hazlitt, "that I had composed a work, in which I had in some sort handled

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about a score of leading characters, he remarked: 'Then you will have one man against you, and the remaining nineteen for you.' I have not found it so."

But apart from the intrinsic merit of this series of literary portraitures, the character of the persons described has a tendency to confer on the volume a standard value, and to stamp it with permanence. Leigh Hunt, indeed, blamed his old friend for his habit of assailing indiscriminately both sides in politics, and thought that it contributed to injure the Liberal cause, which none could hold dearer than Hazlitt. There was something in this, of course; and it is curious to observe how, in the same way, the writer speaks in the handsomest terms of men who, like Campbell, had treated him with little else than abuse.

Charles Lamb, in a letter to his Quaker correspondent Barton, of February 10, 1825, says: "The Spirit of the Age is by Hazlitt: The characters of Coleridge, &c., he had done better in former publications, the praise and the abuse much stronger, &c., but the new ones are capitally done. Horne Tooke is a matchless portrait. . . . He has laid too many colours on my likeness; but I have had so much injustice done me in my own name, that I make a rule of accepting as much overmeasure to Elia as gentlemen think proper to bestow."

W. Carew Hazlitt.

Barnes Common, Surrey,
November 1*st*, 1885.

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CONTENTS.

The Spirit of the Age.

	PAGE
Jeremy Bentham	1
William Godwin	21
Mr. Coleridge	43
Rev. Mr. Irving	61
Mr. Horne Tooke	77
Sir Walter Scott	97
Lord Byron	117
Mr. Southey	135
Mr. Wordsworth	149
Sir James Mackintosh	165
Mr. Malthus	181
Mr. Canning	201
Mr. Gifford	217
Mr. Jeffrey	237
Mr. Brougham.—Sir F. Burdett	253
Lord Eldon.—Mr. Wilberforce	267
Mr. Cobbett	283
Mr. Campbell.—Mr. Crabbe.	299
Mr. T. Moore.—Mr. Leigh Hunt	317
Elia.—Geoffrey Crayon	333

Advice to a Patriot	347
A Letter to William Gifford, Esq.	385

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JEREMY BENTHAM.

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JEREMY BENTHAM.

MR. BENTHAM is one of those persons who verify the old adage, that "A prophet has most honour out of his own country." His reputation lies at the circumference; and the lights of his understanding are reflected, with increasing lustre, on the other side of the globe. His name is little known in England, better in Europe, best of all in the plains of Chili and the mines of Mexico. He has offered constitutions for the New World, and legislated for future times. The people of Westminster, where he lives, hardly dream of such a person; but the Siberian savage has received cold comfort from his lunar aspect, and may say to him with Caliban—"I know thee, and thy dog and thy bush!" The tawny Indian may hold out the hand of fellowship to him across the GREAT PACIFIC. We believe that the Empress Catherine corresponded with him; and we know that the Emperor Alexander called upon him, and presented him with his miniature in a gold snuff-box, which the philosopher, to his eternal honour, returned. Mr. Hobhouse is a greater man at the hustings, Lord Rolle at Plymouth Dock; but Mr. Bentham would carry it hollow, on the score of popularity, at Paris or Pegu. The reason is, that our author's influence is purely intellectual. He has devoted his life to

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the pursuit of abstract and general truths, and to those studies—

"That waft a *thought* from Indus to the Pole"—

and has never mixed himself up with personal intrigues or party politics. He once, indeed, stuck up a hand-bill to say that he (Jeremy Bentham) being of sound mind, was of opinion that Sir Samuel Romilly was the most proper person to represent Westminster; but this was the whim of the moment. Otherwise, his reasonings, if true at all, are true everywhere alike: his speculations concern humanity at large, and are not confined to the hundred or the bills of mortality. It is in moral as in physical magnitude. The little is seen best near: the great appears in its proper dimensions, only from a more commanding point of view, and gains strength with time, and elevation from distance!

Mr. Bentham is very much among philosophers what La Fontaine was among poets:—in general habits and in all but his professional pursuits, he is a mere child. He has lived for the last forty years in a house in Westminster, overlooking the Park, like an anchoret in his cell, reducing law to a system, and the mind of man to a machine. He scarcely ever goes out, and sees very little company. The favoured few, who have the privilege of the *entrée*, are always admitted one by one. He does not like to have witnesses to his conversation. He talks a great deal, and listens to nothing but facts. When any one calls upon him, he invites them to take a turn round his garden with him.[1]

[1] There are still living a few who recollect seeing Bentham pacing his garden at a style between a walk and a run, in the way described in the text. The house where Milton, and afterwards Hazlitt, lived in York Street, Westminster, overlooked Bentham's grounds. It has since been demolished. Hazlitt rented it from Bentham in 1814.—ED.

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Mr. Bentham is an economist of his time, and sets apart this portion of it to air and exercise; and there you may see the lively old man, his mind still buoyant with thought and with the prospect of futurity, in eager conversation with some Opposition Member, some expatriated Patriot, or Transatlantic Adventurer, urging the extinction of Close Boroughs, or planning a code of laws for some "lone island in the watery waste," his walk almost amounting to a run, his tongue keeping pace with it in shrill, cluttering accents, negligent of his person, his dress, and his manner, intent only on his grand theme of UTILITY—or pausing, perhaps, for want of breath and with lack-lustre eye, to point out to the stranger a stone in the wall at the end of his garden (overarched by two beautiful cotton-trees) *Inscribed to the Prince of Poets,* which marks the house where Milton formerly lived. To show how little the refinements of taste or fancy enter into our author's system, he proposed at one time to cut down these beautiful trees, to convert the garden where he had breathed the air of Truth and Heaven for near half a century into a paltry *Chrestomathic School,* and to make Milton's house (the cradle of Paradise Lost) a thoroughfare, like a three-stalled stable, for the idle rabble of Westminster to pass backwards and forwards to it with their cloven hoofs.

Let us not, however, be getting on too fast—Milton himself taught school! There is something not altogether dissimilar between Mr. Bentham's appearance and the portraits of Milton—the same silvery tone, a few dishevelled hairs, a peevish, yet puritanical expression, an irritable temperament corrected by habit and discipline. Or in modern times, he is something between Franklin and Charles Fox, with the comfortable double-chin and sleek thriving look of the one, and the quiver-

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ing lip, the restless eye, and animated acuteness of the other. His eye is quick and lively; but it glances not from object to object, but from thought to thought. He is evidently a man occupied with some train of fine and inward association. He regards the people about him no more than the flies of a summer. He meditates the coming age. He hears and sees only what suits his purpose, or some "foregone conclusion;" and looks out for facts and passing occurrences in order to put them into his logical machinery and grind them into the dust and powder of some subtle theory, as the miller looks out for grist to his mill! Add to this physiognomical sketch the minor points of costume, the open shirt-collar, the single-breasted coat, the old-fashioned half-boots and ribbed stockings; and you will find in Mr. Bentham's general appearance a singular mixture of boyish simplicity and of the venerableness of age.

In a word, our celebrated jurist presents a striking illustration of the difference between the *philosophical* and the *regal* look; that is, between the merely abstracted and the merely personal. There is a lack-adaisical *bon-hommie* about his whole aspect, none of the fierceness of pride or power; an unconscious neglect of his own person, instead of a stately assumption of superiority; a good-humoured, placid intelligence, instead of a lynx-eyed watchfulness, as if it wished to make others its prey, or was afraid they might turn and rend him; he is a beneficent spirit, prying into the universe, not lording it over it; a thoughtful spectator of the scenes of life, or ruminator on the fate of mankind, not a painted pageant, a stupid idol set up on its pedestal of pride for men to fall down and worship with idiot fear and wonder at the thing themselves have made, and which, without that fear and wonder, would in itself be nothing.

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Mr. Bentham, perhaps, over-rates the importance of his own theories. He has been heard to say (without any appearance of pride or affectation) that "he should like to live the remaining years of his life, a year at a time at the end of the next six or eight centuries, to see the effect which his writings would by that time have had upon the world." Alas! his name will hardly live so long! Nor do we think, in point of fact, that Mr. Bentham has given any new or decided impulse to the human mind. He cannot be looked upon in the light of a discoverer in legislation or morals.[1] He has not struck out any great leading principle or parent-truth, from which a number of others might be deduced, nor has he enriched the common and established stock of intelligence with original observations, like pearls thrown into wine. One truth discovered is immortal, and entitles its author to be so: for, like a new substance in nature, it cannot be destroyed. But Mr. Bentham's *forte* is arrangement; and the form of truth, though not its essence, varies with time and circumstance. He has methodised, collated, and condensed all the materials prepared to his hand on the subjects of which he treats, in a masterly and scientific manner; but we should find a difficulty in adducing from his different works (however elaborate or closely reasoned) any new element of thought, or even a new fact or illustration. His writings are, therefore, chiefly valuable as *books of reference*, as bringing down the account

[1] This is scarcely so, as the greater part of the reforms carried out by Brougham and Romilly had in Bentham their real initiatives. Yet when lately in the House of Commons his name was mentioned, a laugh was raised by some of the intelligent and cultivated gentlemen whom the country still sends to Westminster to make up a sham popular assembly. Brougham alluded to Bentham when he acknowledged that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel.—Ed.

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of intellectual inquiry to the present period, and disposing the results in a compendious, connected, and tangible shape; but books of reference are chiefly serviceable for facilitating the acquisition of knowledge, and are constantly liable to be superseded and to grow out of fashion with its progress, as the scaffolding is thrown down as soon as the building is completed.

Mr. Bentham is not the first writer (by a great many) who has assumed the principle of UTILITY as the foundation of just laws, and of all moral and political reasoning:—his merit is, that he has applied this principle more closely and literally; that he has brought all the objections and arguments, more distinctly labelled and ticketed, under this one head, and made a more constant and explicit reference to it at every step of his progress, than any other writer. Perhaps the weak side of his conclusions also is, that he has carried this single view of his subject too far, and not made sufficient allowance for the varieties of human nature, and the caprices and irregularities of the human will. "He has not allowed for the *wind*." It is not that you can be said to see his favourite doctrine of Utility glittering everywhere through his system, like a vein of rich, shining ore (that is not the nature of the material)—but it might be plausibly objected that he had struck the whole mass of fancy, prejudice, passion, sense, whim, with his petrific, leaden mace, that he had "bound volatile Hermes," and reduced the theory and practice of human life to a *caput mortuum* of reason, and dull, plodding, technical calculation. The gentleman is himself a capital logician; and he has been led by this circumstance to consider man as a logical animal. We fear this view of the matter will hardly hold water. If we attend to the *moral* man, the constitution of his mind will scarcely be found to be built up of pure

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reason and a regard to consequences: if we consider the *criminal* man (with whom the legislator has chiefly to do), it will be found to be still less so.

Every pleasure, says Mr. Bentham, is equally a good, and is to be taken into the account as such in a moral estimate, whether it be the pleasure of sense or of conscience, whether it arise from the exercise of virtue or the perpetration of crime. We are afraid the human mind does not readily come into this doctrine, this *ultima ratio philosophorum*, interpreted according to the letter. Our moral sentiments are made up of sympathies and antipathies, of sense and imagination, of understanding and prejudice. The soul, by reason of its weakness, is an aggregating and exclusive principle; it clings obstinately to some things, and violently rejects others. And it must do so, in a great measure, or it would act contrary to its own nature. It needs helps and stages in its progress, and "all appliances and means to boot," which can raise it to a partial conformity to truth and good (the utmost it is capable of) and bring it into a tolerable harmony with the universe. By aiming at too much, by dismissing collateral aids, by extending itself to the farthest verge of the conceivable and possible, it loses its elasticity and vigour, its impulse and its direction.

The moralist can no more do without the intermediate use of rules and principles, without the 'vantage ground of habit, without the levers of the understanding, than the mechanist can discard the use of wheels and pulleys, and perform every thing by simple motion. If the mind of man were competent to comprehend the whole of truth and good, and act upon it at once, and independently of all other considerations, Mr. Bentham's plan would be a feasible one, and *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth*, would be the best pos-

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sible ground to place morality upon. But it is not so. In ascertaining the rules of moral conduct, we must have regard not merely to the nature of the object, but to the capacity of the agent, and to his fitness for apprehending or attaining it. Pleasure is that which is so in itself: good is that which approves itself as such on reflection, or the idea of which is a source of satisfaction. All pleasure is not, therefore (morally speaking) equally a good: for all pleasure does not equally bear reflecting on. There are some tastes that are sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly; and there is a similar contradiction and anomaly in the mind and heart of man.

Again, what would become of the *Hæc olim meminisse juvabit* of the poet, if a principle of fluctuation and reaction is not inherent in the very constitution of our nature, or if all moral truth is a mere literal truism? We are not, then, so much to inquire what certain things are abstractedly or in themselves, as how they affect the mind, and to approve or condemn them accordingly. The same object seen near strikes us more powerfully than at a distance: things thrown into masses give a greater blow to the imagination than when scattered and divided into their component parts. A number of mole-hills do not make a mountain, though a mountain is actually made up of atoms: so moral truth must present itself under a certain aspect and from a certain point of view, in order to produce its full and proper effect upon the mind. The laws of the affections are as necessary as those of optics. A calculation of consequences is no more equivalent to a sentiment than a *seriatim* enumeration of square yards or feet touches the fancy like the sight of the Alps or Andes.

To give an instance or two of what we mean. Those

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who on pure cosmopolite principles, or on the ground of abstract humanity, affect an extraordinary regard for the Turks and Tartars, have been accused of neglecting their duties to their friends and next-door neighbours. Well, then, what is the state of the question here? One human being is, no doubt, as much worth in himself, independently of the circumstances of time or place, as another; but he is not of so much value to us and our affections. Could our imagination take wing (with our speculative faculties) to the other side of the globe or to the ends of the universe, could our eyes behold whatever our reason teaches us to be possible, could our hands reach as far as our thoughts and wishes, we might then busy ourselves to advantage with the Hottentots, or hold intimate converse with the inhabitants of the Moon; but being as we are, our feelings evaporate in so large a space—we must draw the circle of our affections and duties somewhat closer—the heart hovers and fixes nearer home.

It is true, the bands of private, or of local and natural affection, are often, nay in general, too highly strained, so as frequently to do harm instead of good: but the present question is whether we can, with safety and effect, be wholly emancipated from them? Whether we should shake them off at pleasure and without mercy, as the only bar to the triumph of truth and justice? Or whether benevolence, constructed upon a logical scale, would not be merely *nominal*—whether duty, raised to too lofty a pitch of refinement, might not sink into callous indifference or hollow selfishness? Again, is it not to exact too high a strain from humanity, to ask us to qualify the degree of abhorrence we feel against a murderer by taking into our cool consideration the pleasure he may have in committing the deed, and in the prospect of gratifying his avarice or his

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revenge? We are hardly so formed as to sympathise at the same moment with the assassin and his victim. The degree of pleasure the former may feel, instead of extenuating, aggravates his guilt, and shows the depth of his malignity.

Now the mind revolts against this by mere natural antipathy, if it is itself well-disposed; or the slow progress of reason would afford but a feeble resistance to violence and wrong. The will, which is necessary to give consistency and promptness to our good intentions, cannot extend so much candour and courtesy to the antagonist principle of evil: virtue, to be sincere and practical, cannot be divested entirely of the blindness and impetuosity of passion! It has been made a plea (half jest, half earnest) for the horrors of war, that they promote trade and manufactures. It has been said, as a set-off for the atrocities practised upon the negro slaves in the West Indies, that without their blood and sweat, so many millions of people could not have sugar to sweeten their tea. Fires and murders have been argued to be beneficial, as they serve to fill the newspapers, and for a subject to talk of—this is a sort of sophistry that it might be difficult to disprove on the bar scheme of contingent utility; but on the ground that we have stated, it must pass for mere irony. What the proportion between the good and the evil will really be found in any of the supposed cases, may be a question to the understanding; but to the imagination and the heart, that is, to the natural feelings of mankind, it admits of none!

Mr. Bentham, in adjusting the provisions of a penal code, lays too little stress on the co-operation of the natural prejudices of mankind, and the habitual feelings of that class of persons for whom they are more particularly designed. Legislators (we mean writers on

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legislation) are philosophers, and governed by their reason: criminals, for whose control laws are made, are a set of desperadoes, governed only by their passions. What wonder that so little progress has been made towards a mutual understanding between the two parties! They are quite a different species, and speak a different language, and are sadly at a loss for a common interpreter between them. Perhaps the Ordinary of Newgate bids as fair for this office as anyone. What should Mr. Bentham, sitting at ease in his arm-chair, composing his mind before he begins to write by a prelude on the organ, and looking out at a beautiful prospect when he is at a loss for an idea, know of the principles of action of rogues, outlaws, and vagabonds? No more than Montaigne of the motions of his cat! If sanguine and tender-hearted philanthropists have set on foot an inquiry into the barbarity and the defects of penal laws, the practical improvements have been mostly suggested by reformed cut-throats, turnkeys, and thief-takers. What even can the Honourable House who, when the Speaker has pronounced the well-known, wished-for sounds, "That this House do now adjourn," retire, after voting a royal crusade or a loan of millions, to lie on down, and feed on plate in spacious palaces, know of what passes in the hearts of wretches in garrets and night-cellars, petty pilferers and marauders, who cut throats and pick pockets with their own hands? The thing is impossible.

The laws of the country are therefore ineffectual and abortive, because they are made by the rich for the poor, by the wise for the ignorant, by the respectable and exalted in station for the very scum and refuse of the community. If Newgate would resolve itself into a committee of the whole Press-yard, with Jack Ketch at its head, aided by confidential persons from the

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county prisons or the Hulks, and would make a clear breast, some *data* might be found out to proceed upon; but as it is, the *criminal mind* of the country is a book sealed, no one has been able to penetrate to the inside! Mr. Bentham, in his attempts to revise and amend our criminal jurisprudence, proceeds entirely on his favourite principle of Utility. Convince highwaymen and housebreakers that it will be for their interest to reform, and they will reform and lead honest lives; according to Mr. Bentham. He says, "All men act from calculation: even madmen reason;" and, in our opinion, he might as well carry this maxim to Bedlam or St. Luke's, and apply it to the inhabitants, as think to coerce or overawe the inmates of a gaol, or those whose practices make them candidates for that distinction, by the mere dry, detailed convictions of the understanding. Criminals are not to be influenced by reason; for it is of the very essence of crime to disregard consequences both to ourselves and others.

You may as well preach philosophy to a drunken man, or to the dead, as to those who are under the instigation of any mischievous passion. A man is a drunkard, and you tell him he ought to be sober; he is debauched, and you ask him to reform; he is idle, and you recommend industry to him as his wisest course; he gambles, and you remind him that he may be ruined by this foible; he has lost his character, and you advise him to get into some reputable service or lucrative situation; vice becomes a habit with him, and you request him to rouse himself and shake it off; he is starving, and you warn him if he breaks the law, he will be hanged. None of this reasoning reaches the mark it aims at. The culprit, who violates and suffers the vengeance of the laws, is not the dupe of ignorance, but the slave of passion, the victim of habit or neces-

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sity. To argue with strong passion, with inveterate habit, with desperate circumstances, is to talk to the winds. Clownish ignorance may indeed be dispelled, and taught better; but it is seldom that a criminal is not aware of the consequences of his act, or has not made up his mind to the alternative. They are, in general, *too knowing by half*. You tell a person of this stamp what is his interest; he says he does not care about his interest, or the world and he differ on that particular. But there is one point on which he must agree with them, namely, what *they* think of his conduct, and that is the only hold you have of him. A man may be callous and indifferent to what happens to himself; but he is never indifferent to public opinion, or proof against open scorn and infamy.

Shame, then, not fear, is the sheet-anchor of the law. He who is not afraid of being pointed at as a *thief*, will not mind a month's hard labour. He who is prepared to take the life of another, is already reckless of his own. But every one makes a sorry figure in the pillory; and the being launched from the New Drop lowers a man in his own opinion. The lawless and violent spirit, who is hurried by headstrong self-will to break the laws, does not like to have the ground of pride and obstinacy struck from under his feet. This is what gives the *swells* of the metropolis such a dread of the *treadmill*—it makes them ridiculous. It must be confessed, that this very circumstance renders the reform of criminals nearly hopeless. It is the apprehension of being stigmatized by public opinion, the fear of what will be thought and said of them, that deters men from the violation of the laws, while their character remains unimpeached; but honour once lost, all is lost. The man can never be himself again! A citizen is like a soldier, a part of a machine, who sub-

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mits to certain hardships, privations and dangers, not for his own ease, pleasure, profit, or even conscience, but—*for shame.* What is it that keeps the machine together in either case? Not punishment or discipline, but sympathy. The soldier mounts the breach or stands in the trenches, the peasant hedges and ditches, or the mechanic plies his ceaseless task, because the one will not be called a *coward*, the other a *rogue:* but let the one turn deserter and the other vagabond, and there is an end of him. The grinding law of necessity, which is no other than a name, a breath, loses its force; he is no longer sustained by the good opinion of others, and he drops out of his place in society, a useless clog!

Mr. Bentham takes a culprit, and puts him into what he calls a *Panopticon*, that is, a sort of circular prison, with open cells, like a glass bee-hive. He sits in the middle, and sees all the other does. He gives him work to do, and lectures him if he does not do it. He takes liquor from him, and society and liberty; but he feeds and clothes him, and keeps him out of mischief; and when he has convinced him by force and reason together, that this life is for his good, he turns him out upon the world a reformed man, and as confident of the success of his handy-work as the shoemaker of that which he has just taken off the last, or the Parisian barber in Sterne, of the buckle of his wig. "Dip it in the ocean," said the perruquier, "and it will stand!" But we doubt the durability of our projector's patch-work. Will our convert to the great principle of Utility work when he is from under Mr. Bentham's eye, because he was forced to work when under it? Will he keep sober, because he has been kept from liquor so long? Will he not return to loose company, because he has had the pleasure of sitting vis-à-vis with a philosopher of late? Will he not steal, now that his

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hands are untied? Will he not take the road, now that it is free to him? Will he not call his benefactor all the names he can set his tongue to, the moment his back is turned? All this is more than to be feared.

The charm of criminal life, like that of savage life, consists in liberty, in hardship, in danger, and in the contempt of death: in one word, in extraordinary excitement; and he who has tasted of it, will no more return to regular habits of life, than a man will take to water after drinking brandy, or than a wild beast will give over hunting its prey. Miracles never cease, to be sure; but they are not to be had wholesale, or *to order*. Mr. Owen, who is another of these proprietors and patentees of reform, has lately got an American savage with him, whom he carries about in great triumph and complacency, as an antithesis to his *New View of Society*, and as winding up his reasoning to what it mainly wanted, an epigrammatic point. Does the benevolent visionary of the Lanark cotton-mills really think this *natural man* will act as a foil to his *artificial man?* Does he for a moment imagine that his *Address to the higher and middle classes*, with all its advantages of fiction, makes anything like so interesting a romance as Hunter's *Captivity among the North American Indians?*

Has he anything to show, in all the apparatus of New Lanark and its desolate monotony, to excite the thrill of imagination like the blankets made of wreaths of snow under which the wild wood-rovers bury themselves for weeks in winter? Or the skin of a leopard, which our hardy adventurer slew, and which served him for great-coat and bedding? Or the rattle-snake that he found by his side as a bedfellow? Or his rolling himself into a ball to escape from him? Or his suddenly placing himself against a tree to avoid being trampled to death by the herd of wild buffaloes,

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that came rushing on like the sound of thunder? Or his account of the huge spiders that prey on blue-bottles and gilded flies in green pathless forests; or of the great Pacific Ocean, that the natives look upon as the gulf that parts time from eternity, and that is to waft them to the spirits of their fathers? After all this, Mr. Hunter must find Mr. Owen and his parallelograms trite and flat, and will, we suspect, take an opportunity to escape from them!

Mr. Bentham's method of reasoning, though comprehensive and exact, labours under the defect of most systems—it is too *topical*. It includes every thing; but it includes every thing alike. It is rather like an inventory, than a valuation of different arguments. Every possible suggestion finds a place, so that the mind is distracted as much as enlightened by this perplexing accuracy. The exceptions seem as important as the rule. By attending to the minute, we overlook the great; and in summing up an account, it will not do merely to insist on the number of items without considering their amount. Our author's page presents a very nicely dove-tailed mosaic pavement of legal common-places. We slip and slide over its even surface without being arrested anywhere. Or his view of the human mind resembles a map, rather than a picture: the outline, the disposition is correct, but it wants colouring and relief. There is a technicality of manner, which renders his writings of more value to the professional inquirer than to the general reader. Again, his style is unpopular, not to say unintelligible. He writes a language of his own that *darkens knowledge*. His works have been translated into French—they ought to be translated into English. People wonder that Mr. Bentham has not been prosecuted for the boldness and severity of some of his invectives. He might wrap up

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high treason in one of his inextricable periods, and it would never find its way into Westminster Hall. He is a kind of Manuscript author—he writes a cypher-hand, which the vulgar have no key to. The construction of his sentences is a curious frame-work with pegs and hooks to hang his thoughts upon, for his own use and guidance, but almost out of the reach of everybody else. It is a barbarous philosophical jargon, with all the repetitions, parentheses, formalities, uncouth nomenclature and verbiage of law-Latin; and what makes it worse, it is not mere verbiage, but has a great deal of acuteness and meaning in it, which you would be glad to pick out if you could.

In short, Mr. Bentham writes as if he was allowed but a single sentence to express his whole view of a subject in, and as if, should he omit a single circumstance or step of the argument, it would be lost to the world for ever, like an estate by a flaw in the title-deeds. This is over-rating the importance of our own discoveries, and mistaking the nature and object of language altogether. Mr. Bentham has *acquired* this disability: it is not natural to him. His admirable little work *On Usury*, published forty years ago, is clear, easy and vigorous. But Mr. Bentham has shut himself up since then "in nook monastic," conversing only with followers of his own or with "men of Ind," and has endeavoured to overlay his natural humour, sense, spirit, and style with the dust and cobwebs of an obscure solitude. The best of it is, he thinks his present mode of expressing himself perfect, and that whatever may be objected to his law or logic, no one can find the least fault with the purity, simplicity, and perspicuity of his style.

Mr. Bentham, in private life, is an amiable and exemplary character. He is a little romantic or so, and has dissipated part of a handsome fortune on impractical

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speculations. He lends an ear to plausible projectors, and, if he cannot prove them to be wrong in their premises or their conclusions, thinks himself bound *in reason* to stake his money on the venture. Strict logicians are licenced visionaries. Mr. Bentham is half-brother to the late Mr. Speaker Abbott.[1] *Proh pudor!* He was educated at Eton, and still takes our novices to task about a passage in Homer or a metre in Virgil. He was afterwards at the University, and he has described the scruples of an ingenuous youthful mind about subscribing the Articles, in a passage in his *Church-of-Englandism*, which smacks of truth and honour both, and does one good to read it in an age, when "to be honest" (or not to laugh at the very idea of honesty) "is to be one man picked out of ten thousand!" Mr. Bentham relieves his mind sometimes, after the fatigue of study, by playing on a fine old organ, and has a relish for Hogarth's prints. He turns wooden utensils in a lathe for exercise, and fancies he can turn men in the same manner. He has no great fondness for poetry, and can hardly extract a moral out of Shakespear. His house is warmed and lighted by steam. He is one of those who prefer the artificial to the natural in most things, and think the mind of man omnipotent. He has a great contempt for out-of-door prospects, for green fields and trees, and is for referring every thing to Utility. There is a little narrowness in this; for if all the sources of satisfaction are taken away, what is to become of utility itself? It is, indeed, the great fault of this able and extraordinary man, that he has concentrated his faculties and feelings too entirely on one subject and pursuit, and has not "looked enough abroad into universality."[2]

[1] Afterward Lord Colchester.

[2] Bacon's Advancement of Learning.

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WILLIAM GODWIN.

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WILLIAM GODWIN.[1]

THE Spirit of the Age was never more fully shown than in its treatment of this writer—its love of paradox and change, its dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day. Five-and-twenty years ago he was in the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity; he blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off. Now he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality. Mr. Godwin, during his lifetime, has secured to himself the triumphs and the mortifications of an extreme notoriety and of a sort of posthumous fame. His bark, after being tossed in the revolutionary tempest, now raised to heaven by all the fury of popular breath, now almost dashed in pieces, and buried in the quicksands of ignorance, or scorched with the lightning of momentary indignation, at length floats on the calm wave that is to bear it down the stream of time.

Mr. Godwin's person is not known, he is not pointed out in the street, his conversation is not courted, his opinions are not asked, he is at the head of no cabal, he

[1] Attention has been directed to the character and writings of Godwin of late years by the appearance of Mr. C. Kegan Paul's *William Godwin, his Friends and Contemporaries*, 1876.—Ed.

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belongs to no party in the State, he has no train of admirers, no one thinks it worth his while even to traduce and vilify him, he has scarcely friend or foe, the world make a point (as Goldsmith used to say) of taking no more notice of him than if such an individual had never existed; he is to all ordinary intents and purposes dead and buried. But the author of *Political Justice*[1] and of *Caleb Williams*[2] can never die; his name is an abstraction in letters; his works are standard in the history of intellect. He is thought of now like any eminent writer of a hundred-and-fifty years ago, or just as he will be a hundred-and-fifty years hence. He knows this, and smiles in silent mockery of himself, reposing on the monument of his fame—

> "——— Sedet, æternumque sedebit
> Infelix Theseus."

No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*. Tom Paine was considered for the time as a Tom Fool to him, Paley an old woman, Edmund Burke a flashy sophist. Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had here taken up its abode; and these were the oracles of thought.

"Throw aside your books of chemistry," said Wordsworth to a young man, a student in the Temple, "and read Godwin on Necessity." Sad necessity! Fatal reverse! Is truth then so variable? Is it one thing at twenty and another at forty? Is it at a burning heat in 1793, and below *zero* in 1814? Not so, in the name of manhood and of common sense! Let us pause here a little. Mr. Godwin indulged in extreme opinions, and carried with him all the most sanguine and fearless

[1] First printed in 1793.
[2] First printed in 1794.

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understandings of the time. What then? Because those opinions were overcharged, were they therefore altogether groundless? Is the very God of our idolatry all of a sudden to become an abomination and an anathema? Could so many young men of talent, of education, and of principle have been hurried away by what had neither truth nor nature, not one particle of honest feeling nor the least show of reason in it? Is the *Modern Philosophy* (as it has been called) at one moment a youthful bride and the next a withered beldame, like the false Duessa in Spenser? Or is the vaunted edifice of Reason, like his House of Pride, gorgeous in front, and dazzling to approach, while "its hinder parts are ruinous, decayed, and old?" Has the main prop, which supported the mighty fabric, been shaken, and given way under the strong grasp of some Samson; or has it not rather been undermined by rats and vermin? At one time, it almost seemed, that "if this failed,

> The pillar'd firmament was rottenness,
> And earth's base built of stubble."

Now scarce a shadow of it remains; it is crumbled to dust, nor is it even talked of! "What, then, went ye forth for to see, a reed shaken with the wind?" Was it for this that our young gownsmen of the greatest expectation and promise, versed in classic lore, steeped in dialetics, armed at all points for the foe, well read, well nurtured, well provided for, left the University and the prospect of lawn sleeves, tearing asunder the shackles of the free-born spirit and the cobwebs of school-divinity, to throw themselves at the feet of the new Gamaliel, and learn wisdom from him? Was it for this, that students at the bar, acute, inquisitive, sceptical (here only wild enthusiasts) neglected for a while the paths of preferment and the law as too narrow, tortuous, and

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unseemly to bear the pure and broad light of reason? Was it for this, that students in medicine missed their way to Lecturerships and the top of their profession, deeming lightly of the health of the body, and dreaming only of the renovation of society and the march of mind? Was it to this that Mr. Southey's *Inscriptions* pointed? to this that Mr. Coleridge's *Religious Musings* tended? Was it for this, that Mr. Godwin himself sat with arms folded, and, "like Cato, gave his little senate laws?" Or rather, like another Prospero, uttered syllables that with their enchanted breath were to change the world, and might almost stop the stars in their courses?

Oh! and is all forgot? Is this sun of intellect blotted from the sky? Or has it suffered total eclipse? Or is it we who make the fancied gloom, by looking at it through the paltry, broken, stained fragments of our own interests and prejudices? Were we fools then, or are we dishonest now? Or was the impulse of the mind less likely to be true and sound when it arose from high thought and warm feeling, than afterwards, when it was warped and debased by the example, the vices, and follies of the world?

The fault, then, of Mr. Godwin's philosophy, in one word, was too much ambition—"by that sin fell the angels!" He conceived too nobly of his fellows (the most unpardonable crime against them, for there is nothing that annoys our self-love so much as being complimented on imaginary achievements, to which we are wholly unequal)—he raised the standard of morality above the reach of humanity, and by directing virtue to the most airy and romantic heights, made her path dangerous, solitary, and impracticable. The author of the *Political Justice* took abstract reason for the rule of conduct and abstract good for its end. He places the human mind on an elevation, from which it commands

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a view of the whole line of moral consequences; and requires it to conform its acts to the larger and more enlightened conscience which it has thus acquired. He absolves man from the gross and narrow ties of sense, custom, authority, private and local attachment, in order that he may devote himself to the boundless pursuit of universal benevolence.

Mr. Godwin gives no quarter to the amiable weaknesses of our nature, nor does he stoop to avail himself of the supplementary aids of an imperfect virtue. Gratitude, promises, friendship, family affection give way, not that they may be merged in the opposite vices or in want of principle, but that the void may be filled up by the disinterested love of good and the dictates of inflexible justice, which is "the law of laws, and sovereign of sovereigns." All minor considerations yield, in his system, to the stern sense of duty, as they do, in the ordinary and established ones, to the voice of necessity. Mr. Godwin's theory, and that of more approved reasoners, differ only in this, that what are with them the exceptions, the extreme cases, he makes the every-day rule. No one denies that on great occasions, in moments of fearful excitement, or when a mighty object is at stake, the lesser and merely instrumental points of duty are to be sacrificed without remorse at the shrine of patriotism, of honour, and of conscience.

But the disciple of the *New School* (no wonder it found so many impugners even in its own bosom!) is to be always the hero of duty; the law to which he has bound himself never swerves nor relaxes; his feeling of what is right is to be at all times wrought up to a pitch of enthusiastic self-devotion; he must become the unshrinking martyr and confessor of the public good. If it be said that this scheme is chimerical and impracticable on ordinary occasions, and to the generality of

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mankind, well and good; but those who accuse the author of having trampled on the common feelings and prejudices of mankind in wantonness or insult, or without wishing to substitute something better (and only unattainable, because it is better) in their stead, accuse him wrongfully. We may not be able to launch the bark of our affections on the ocean-tide of humanity, we may be forced to paddle along its shores, or shelter in its creeks and rivulets: but we have no right to reproach the bold and adventurous pilot, who dared us to tempt the uncertain abyss, with our own want of courage or of skill, or with the jealousies and impatience, which deter us from undertaking, or might prevent us from accomplishing the voyage!

The *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* (it was urged by its favourers and defenders at the time, and may still be so, without either profaneness or levity) is a metaphysical and logical commentary on some of the most beautiful and striking texts of Scripture. Mr. Godwin is a mixture of the Stoic and of the Christian philosopher. To break the force of the vulgar objections and outcry that have been raised against the Modern Philosophy, as if it were a new and monstrous birth in morals, it may be worth noticing, that volumes of sermons have been written to excuse the founder of Christianity for not including friendship and private affection among its golden rules, but rather excluding them.[1] Moreover, the answer to the question, "Who is thy neighbour, added to the divine precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is the same as in the exploded pages of our author—"he to whom we

[1] Shaftesbury made this an objection to Christianity, which was answered by Foster, Leland, and other eminent divines, on the ground that Christianity had a higher object in view, namely, general philanthropy.

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can do most good." In determining this point, we were not to be influenced by any extrinsic or collateral considerations, by our own predilections, or the expectations of others, by our obligations to them or any services they might be able to render us, by the climate they were born in, by the house they lived in, by rank or religion, or party, or personal ties, but by the abstract merits, the pure and unbiassed justice of the case.

The artificial helps and checks to moral conduct were set aside as spurious and unnecessary, and we came at once to the grand and simple question—"In what manner we could best contribute to the greatest possible good?" This was the paramount obligation in all cases whatever, from which we had no right to free ourselves upon any idle or formal pretext, and of which each person was to judge for himself, under the infallible authority of his own opinion and the inviolable sanction of his self-approbation. "There was the rub that made *philosophy* of so short life!" Mr. Godwin's definition of morals was the same as the admired one of law, *reason without passion;* but with the unlimited scope of private opinion, and in a boundless field of speculation (for nothing less would satisfy the pretensions of the New School), there was danger that the unseasoned novice might substitute some pragmatical conceit of his own for the rule of right reason, and mistake a heartless indifference for a superiority to more natural and generous feelings. Our ardent and dauntless reformer followed out the moral of the parable of the Good Samaritan into its most rigid and repulsive consequences with a pen of steel, and let fall his "trenchant blade" on every vulnerable point of human infirmity; but there is a want in his system of the mild and persuasive tone of the Gospel, where "all is conscience and tender heart."

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Man was indeed screwed up by mood and figure into a logical machine, that was to forward the public good with the utmost punctuality and effect, and it might go very well on smooth ground and under favourable circumstances; but would it work up-hill or *against the grain?* It was to be feared that the proud Temple of Reason, which at a distance and in stately supposition shone like the palaces of the New Jerusalem, might (when placed on actual ground) be broken up into the sordid styes of sensuality and the petty huckster's shops of self-interest! Every man (it was proposed—"so ran the tenour of the bond") was to be a Regulus, a Codrus, a Cato, or a Brutus—every woman a Mother of the Gracchi.

"——— It was well said,
And 'tis a kind of good deed to say well."

But heroes on paper might degenerate into vagabonds in practice, Corinnas into courtezans.[1] Thus a refined and permanent individual attachment is intended to supply the place and avoid the inconveniences of marriage; but vows of eternal constancy, without church security, are found to be fragile.

A member of the *ideal* and perfect commonwealth of letters lends another a hundred pounds for immediate and pressing use; and when he applies for it again, the borrower has still more need of it than he, and retains it for his own especial, which is tantamount to the public, good.

The Exchequer of pure reason, like that of the State, never refunds. The political as well as the religious fanatic appeals from the overweening opinion and claims of others to the highest and most impartial tribunal, namely, his own breast. Two persons agree to live together in Chambers on principles of pure equality and

[1] This was a home-thrust.—Ed.

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mutual assistance—but when it comes to the push, one of them finds that the other always insists on his fetching water from the pump in Hare-court, and cleaning his shoes for him. A modest assurance was not the least indispensable virtue in the new perfectibility code; and it was hence discovered to be a scheme, like other schemes where there are all prizes and no blanks, for the accommodation of the enterprizing and cunning, at the expense of the credulous and honest. This broke up the system, and left no good odour behind it! Reason has become a sort of bye-word, and philosophy has "fallen first into a fasting, then into a sadness, then into a decline, and last, into the dissolution of which we all complain!" This is a worse error than the former: we may be said to have "lost the immortal part of ourselves, and what remains is beastly!"

The point of view from which this matter may be fairly considered is two-fold, and may be stated thus:— In the first place, it by no means follows, because reason is found not to be the only infallible or safe rule of conduct, that it is no rule at all; or that we are to discard it altogether with derision and ignominy. On the contrary, if not the sole, it is the principal ground of action; it is "the guide, the stay and anchor of our purest thoughts, and soul of all our moral being." In proportion as we strengthen and expand this principle, and bring our affections and subordinate, but perhaps more powerful motives of action into harmony with it, it will not admit of a doubt that we advance to the goal of perfection, and answer the ends of our creation, those ends which not only morality enjoins, but which religion sanctions. If with the utmost stretch of reason, man cannot (as some seemed inclined to suppose) soar up to the God, and quit the ground of human frailty, yet, stripped wholly of it, he sinks at once into the brute.

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If it cannot stand alone in its naked simplicity, but requires other props to buttress it up, or ornaments to set it off; yet without it the moral structure would fall flat and dishonoured to the ground.

Private reason is that which raises the individual above his mere animal instincts, appetites, and passions: public reason in its gradual progress separates the savage from the civilized state. Without the one, men would resemble wild beasts in their dens; without the other, they would be speedily converted into hordes of barbarians or banditti. Sir Walter Scott, in his zeal to restore the spirit of loyalty, of passive obedience and non-resistance as an acknowledgment for his having been created a Baronet by a Prince of the House of Brunswick, may think it a fine thing to return in imagination to the good old times, "when in Auvergne alone there were three hundred nobles whose most ordinary actions were robbery, rape, and murder," when the castle of each Norman baron was a stronghold from which the lordly proprietor issued to oppress and plunder the neighbouring districts, and when the Saxon peasantry were treated by their gay and gallant tyrants as a herd of loathsome swine—but, for our own parts, we beg to be excused; we had rather live in the same age with the author of *Waverley* and *Blackwood's Magazine.*

Reason is the meter and alnager in civil intercourse, by which each person's upstart and contradictory pretensions are weighed and approved or found wanting, and without which it could not subsist, any more than traffic or the exchange of commodities could be carried on without weights and measures. It is the medium of knowledge and the polisher of manners, by creating common interests and ideas. Or, in the words of a contemporary writer, "Reason is the queen of the moral world, the soul of the universe, the lamp of human life,

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the pillar of society, the foundation of law, the beacon of nations, the golden chain let down from heaven, which links all accountable and all intelligent natures in one common system—and, in the vain strife between fanatic innovation and fanatic prejudice, we are exhorted to dethrone this queen of the world, to blot out this light of the mind, to deface this fair column, to break in pieces this golden chain!

"We are to discard and throw from us with loud taunts and bitter execrations that reason, which has been the lofty theme of the philosopher, the poet, the moralist, and the divine, whose name was not first named to be abused by the enthusiasts of the French Revolution, or to be blasphemed by the madder enthusiasts, the advocates of Divine Right, but which is coeval with, and inseparable from the nature and faculties of man—is the image of his Maker stamped upon him at his birth, the understanding breathed into him with the breath of life, and in the participation and improvement of which alone he is raised above the brute creation and his own physical nature!"—The overstrained and ridiculous pretensions of monks and ascetics were never thought to justify a return to unbridled licence of manners or the throwing aside of all decency. The hypocrisy, cruelty and fanaticism, often attendant on peculiar professions of sanctity, have not banished the name of religion from the world. Neither can "the unreasonableness of the reason" of some modern sciolists so "unreason our reason," as to debar us of the benefit of this principle in future, or to disfranchise us of the highest privilege of our nature.

In the second place, if it is admitted that Reason alone is not the sole and self-sufficient ground of morals, it is to Mr. Godwin that we are indebted for having settled the point. No one denied or distrusted this

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principle (before his time) as the absolute judge and interpreter in all questions of difficulty; and if this is no longer the case, it is because he has taken this principle, and followed it into its remotest consequences with more keenness of eye and steadiness of hand than any other expounder of ethics. His grand work is (at least) an *experimentum crucis* to show the weak sides and imperfections of human reason as the sole law of human action. By overshooting the mark, or by "flying an eagle flight, forth and right on," he has pointed out the limit or line of separation, between what is practicable and what is barely conceivable; by imposing impossible tasks on the naked strength of the will, he has discovered how far it is or is not in our power to dispense with the illusions of sense, to resist the calls of affection, to emancipate ourselves from the force of habit, and thus, though he has not said it himself, has enabled others to say to the towering aspirations after good and to the over-bearing pride of human intellect: "Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther!"

Captain Parry would be thought to have rendered a service to navigation and his country, no less by proving that there is no North-West Passage, than if he had ascertained that there is one: so Mr. Godwin has rendered an essential service to moral science, by attempting (in vain) to pass the Arctic Circle and Frozen Regions, where the understanding is no longer warmed by the affections, nor fanned by the breeze of fancy! This is the effect of all bold, original, and powerful thinking, that it either discovers the truth or detects where error lies; and the only crime with which Mr. Godwin can be charged as a political and moral reasoner is, that he has displayed a more ardent spirit and a more independent activity of thought than others, in establishing the fallacy (if fallacy it be) of an old popular

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prejudice that *the Just and True were one*, by "championing it to the Outrance," and in the final result placing the Gothic structure of human virtue on an humbler, but a wider and safer, foundation than it had hitherto occupied in the volumes and systems of the learned.

Mr. Godwin is an inventor in the regions of romance, as well as a skilful and hardy explorer of those of moral truth. *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon*[1] are two of the most splendid and impressive works of the imagination that have appeared in our times. It is not merely that these novels are very well for a philosopher to have produced—they are admirable and complete in themselves, and would not lead you to suppose that the author, who is so entirely at home in human character and dramatic situation, had ever dabbled in logic or metaphysics. The first of these, particularly, is a masterpiece, both as to invention and execution. The romantic and chivalrous principle of the love of personal fame is embodied in the finest possible manner in the character of Falkland;[2] as in Caleb Williams (who is not the first, but the second character in the piece) we see the very demon of curiosity personified. Perhaps the art, with which these two characters are contrived to relieve and set off each other, has never been surpassed in any work of fiction, with the exception of the immortal satire of Cervantes. The restless and inquisitive spirit of Caleb

[1] *St. Leon* originally appeared in 1799, and in the following year a sort of skit upon it was printed under the title of *St. Godwin.*—Ed.

[2] Mr. Fuseli used to object to this striking delineation a want of historical correctness, inasmuch as the animating principle of the true chivalrous character was the sense of honour, not the mere regard to, or saving of, appearances. This, we think, must be an hypercriticism, from all we remember of books of chivalry and heroes of romance.

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Williams, in search and in possession of his patron's fatal secret, haunts the latter like a second conscience, plants stings in his tortured mind, fans the flame of his jealous ambition, struggling with agonized remorse; and the hapless but noble-minded Falkland at length falls a martyr to the persecution of that morbid and overpowering interest, of which his mingled virtues and vices have rendered him the object.

We conceive no one ever began *Caleb Williams* that did not read it through: no one that ever read it could possibly forget it, or speak of it after any length of time but with an impression as if the events and feelings had been personal to himself. This is the case also with the story of *St. Leon* which, with less dramatic interest and intensity of purpose, is set off by a more gorgeous and flowing eloquence and by a crown of preternatural imagery, that waves over it like a palm-tree! It is the beauty and the charm of Mr. Godwin's descriptions that the reader identifies himself with the author; and the secret of this is, that the author has identified himself with his personages. Indeed, he has created them. They are the proper issue of his brain, lawfully begot, not foundlings, nor the "bastards of his art." He is not an indifferent, callous spectator of the scenes which he himself pourtrays, but without seeming to feel them. There is no look of patch-work and plagiarism, the beggarly copiousness of borrowed wealth; no tracery-work from worm-eaten manuscripts, from forgotten chronicles, nor piecing out of vague traditions with fragments and snatches of old ballads, so that the result resembles a gaudy, staring transparency, in which you cannot distinguish the daubing of the painter from the light that shines through the flimsy colours, and gives them brilliancy.

Here all is clearly made out with strokes of the

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pencil, by fair, not by factitious means. Our author takes a given subject from nature or from books, and then fills it up with the ardent workings of his own mind, with the teeming and audible pulses of his own heart. The effect is entire and satisfactory in proportion. The work (so to speak) and the author are one. We are not puzzled to decide upon their respective pretensions. In reading Mr. Godwin's novels, we know what share of merit the author has in them. In reading the *Scotch Novels*, we are perpetually embarrassed in asking ourselves this question; and perhaps it is not altogether a false modesty that prevents the editor from putting his name in the title-page—he is (for anything we know to the contrary) only a more voluminous sort of Allen-a-Dale.

At least, we may claim this advantage for the English author, that the chains with which he rivets our attention are forged out of his own thoughts, link by link, blow for blow, with glowing enthusiasm: we see the genuine ore melted in the furnace of fervid feeling, and moulded into stately and *ideal* forms; and this is so far better than peeping into an old iron shop, or pilfering from a dealer in marine stores! There is one drawback, however, attending this mode of proceeding, which attaches generally, indeed, to all originality of composition; namely, that it has a tendency to a certain degree of monotony. He who draws upon his own resources, easily comes to an end of his wealth. Mr. Godwin, in all his writings, dwells upon one idea or exclusive view of a subject, aggrandises a sentiment, exaggerates a character, or pushes an argument to extremes, and makes up by the force of style and continuity of feeling for what he wants in variety of incident or ease of manner. This necessary defect is observable in his best works, and is still more so in Fleetwood and

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Mandeville; the one of which, compared with his more admired performances, is mawkish, and the other morbid. Mr. Godwin is also an essayist, an historian—in short, what is he not, that belongs to the character of an indefatigable and accomplished author? His *Life of Chaucer* would have given celebrity to any man of letters possessed of three thousand a year, with leisure to write quartos: as the legal acuteness displayed in his *Remarks on Judge Eyre's Charge to the Jury* would have raised any briefless barrister to the height of his profession.

This temporary effusion did more—it gave a turn to the trials for high treason in the year 1794, and possibly saved the lives of twelve innocent individuals, marked out as political victims to the Moloch of Legitimacy, which then skulked behind a British throne, and had not yet dared to stalk forth (as it has done since) from its lurking-place, in the face of day, to brave the opinion of the world. If it had then glutted its maw with its intended prey (the sharpness of Mr. Godwin's pen cut the legal cords with which it was attempted to bind them), it might have done so sooner, and with more lasting effect. The world do not know (and we are not sure but the intelligence may startle Mr. Godwin himself), that he is the author of a volume of Sermons[1] and of a Life of Chatham.[2]

Mr. Fawcett,[3] (an old friend and fellow-student of

[1] *Sketches of History in Six Sermons*, 1784, seems to have been his earliest publication. But his writings were very voluminous. He is now, of course, chiefly recollected as one of the pioneers of political reform.—Ed.

[2] We had forgotten the tragedies of *Antonio* and *Faulkner*. Peace be with their *manes!* [To the former, Lamb contributed an epilogue on its performance; but it was a failure. It was published in 1800, and the other play in 1808.—Ed.]

[3] The Rev. Joseph Fawcett, whom I have commemorated in the *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867.—Ed.

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our author, and who always spoke of his writings with admiration tinctured with wonder) used to mention a circumstance with respect to the last-mentioned work, which may throw some light on the history and progress of Mr. Godwin's mind. He was anxious to make his biographical account as complete as he could, and applied for this purpose to many of his acquaintance to furnish him with anecdotes or to suggest criticisms. Amongst others, Mr. Fawcett repeated to him what he thought a striking passage in a speech on *General Warrants* delivered by Lord Chatham, at which he (Mr. Fawcett) had been present. "Every man's house" (said this emphatic thinker and speaker) "has been called his castle. And why is it called his castle? Is it because it is defended by a wall, because it is surrounded with a moat? No, it may be nothing more than a straw-built shed. It may be open to all the elements: the wind may enter in, the rain may enter in—but the king *cannot* enter in!" His friend thought that the point was here palpable enough; but when he came to read the printed volume, he found it thus *transposed:* "Every man's house is his castle. And why is it called so? Is it because it is defended by a wall, because it is surrounded with a moat? No, it may be nothing more than a straw-built shed. It may be exposed to all the elements: the rain may enter into it, *all the winds of Heaven may whistle round it*, but the king cannot," &c.

This was what Fawcett called a defect of *natural imagination*. He at the same time admitted that Mr. Godwin had improved his native sterility in this respect, or atoned for it by incessant activity of mind and by accumulated stores of thought and powers of language. In fact, his *forte* is not the spontaneous, but the voluntary, exercise of talent. He fixes his ambition on a high

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point of excellence, and spares no pains or time in attaining it. He has less of the appearance of a man of genius, than anyone who has given such decided and ample proofs of it. He is ready only on reflection, dangerous only at the rebound. He gathers himself up, and strains every nerve and faculty with deliberate aim to some heroic and dazzling achievement of intellect: but he must make a career, before he flings himself armed upon the enemy, or he is sure to be unhorsed. Or he resembles an eight-day clock that must be wound up long before it can strike. Therefore, his powers of conversation are but limited. He has neither acuteness of remark nor a flow of language, both which might be expected from his writings, as these are no less distinguished by a sustained and impassioned tone of declamation than by novelty of opinion or brilliant tracks of invention. In company, Horne Tooke used to make a mere child of him—or of any man!

Mr. Godwin liked this treatment,[1] and indeed it is his foible to fawn on those who use him *cavalierly*, and to be cavalier to those who express an undue or unqualified admiration of him. He looks up with unfeigned respect to acknowledged reputation (but then it must be very well ascertained before he admits it)—and has a favourite hypothesis that Understanding and Virtue are the same thing. Mr. Godwin possesses a high degree of philosophical candour, and studiously paid the homage of his pen and person to Mr. Malthus, Sir James Mack-

[1] To be sure, it was redeemed by a high respect and by some magnificent compliments. Once in particular, at his own table, after a good deal of *badinage* and cross-questioning about his being the author of the *Reply to Judge Eyre's Charge*, on Mr. Godwin's acknowledging that he was, Mr. Tooke said, "Come here, then,"—and when his guest went round to his chair, he took his hand, and pressed it to his lips, saying—"I can do no less for the hand that saved my life!"

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intosh, and Dr. Parr, for their unsparing attacks on him; but woe to any poor devil who had the hardihood to defend him against them! In private, the author of *Political Justice* at one time reminded those who knew him of the Metaphysician engrafted on the Dissenting Minister. There was a dictatorial, captious, quibbling pettiness of manner.

He lost this awkwardness with the first blush of popularity,[1] which surprised him in the retirement of his study; and he has since, with the wear and tear of society, from being too pragmatical, become somewhat too careless. He is, at present, as easy as an old glove. Perhaps there is a little attention to effect in this, and he wishes to appear a foil to himself. His best moments are with an intimate acquaintance or two, when he gossips in a fine vein about old authors, Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*, or Burnett's *History of his own Time;* and you perceive by your host's talk, as by the taste of seasoned wine, that he has a *cellarage* in his understanding! Mr. Godwin also has a correct *acquired* taste in poetry and the drama. He relishes Donne and Ben Jonson, and recites a passage from either with an agreeable mixture of pedantry and *bonhommie*. He is not one of those who do not grow wiser with opportunity and reflection: he changes his opinions, and changes them for the better. The alteration of his taste in poetry, from an exclusive admiration of the age of Queen Anne to an almost equally exclusive one of that of Elizabeth, is, we suspect, owing to Mr. Coleridge who, some twenty years ago, threw a great stone into the standing pool of criticism, which splashed some persons with mud, but which gave a motion to the

[1] In the edition of 1825, the text reads, "He lost this [manner] with the first blush *and awkwardness* of popularity."—Ed.

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surface and a reverberation to the neighbouring echoes, which has not since subsided.

In common company, Mr. Godwin either goes to sleep himself, or sets others to sleep. He is at present engaged in a History of the Commonwealth of England. *Esto perpetua!* In size Mr Godwin is below the common stature, nor is his deportment graceful or animated. His face is, however, fine, with an expression of placid temper and recondite thought. He is not unlike the common portraits of Locke. There is a very admirable likeness of him by Mr. Northcote which, with a more heroic and dignified air, only does justice to the profound sagacity and benevolent aspirations of our author's mind. Mr. Godwin has kept the best company of his time; but he has survived most of the celebrated persons with whom he lived in habits of intimacy. He speaks of them with enthusiasm and with discrimination, and sometimes dwells with peculiar delight on a day passed at John Kemble's in company with Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Curran, Mrs. Wolstonecraft and Mrs. Inchbald, when the conversation took a most animated turn, and the subject was of Love. Of all these our author is the only one remaining. Frail tenure, on which human life and genius are lent us for a while to improve or to enjoy!

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MR. COLERIDGE.

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MR. COLERIDGE.

THE present is an age of talkers, and not of doers; and the reason is, that the world is growing old. We are so far advanced in the Arts and Sciences, that we live in retrospect, and doat on past achievements. The accumulation of knowledge has been so great, that we are lost in wonder at the height it has reached, instead of attempting to climb or add to it; while the variety of objects distracts and dazzles the looker-on.[1] What *niche* remains unoccupied? What path untried? What is the use of doing anything, unless we could do better than all those who have gone before us? What hope is there of this? We are like those who have been to see some noble monument of art, who are content to admire without thinking of rivalling it; or like guests after a feast, who praise the hospitality of the donor "and thank the bounteous Pan"—perhaps carrying away some trifling fragments; or like the spectators of a mighty battle, who still hear its sound afar off, and the clashing of armour and the neighing of the war-horse and the shout of victory is in their ears, like the rushing of innumerable waters!

Mr. Coleridge has "a mind reflecting ages past:" his voice is like the echo of the congregated roar of the

[1] This sounds strangely in the ear, when one considers how much science has progressed in the sixty years since the *Spirit of the Age* was written.—Ed.

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"dark rearward and abyss" of thought. He who has seen a mouldering tower by the side of a crystal lake, hid by the mist, but glittering in the wave below, may conceive the dim, gleaming, uncertain intelligence of his eye: he who has marked the evening clouds uprolled (a world of vapours) has seen the picture of his mind, unearthly, unsubstantial, with gorgeous tints and ever-varying forms—

> "That which was now a horse, even with a thought
> The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
> As water is in water."

Our author's mind is (as he himself might express it) *tangential*. There is no subject on which he has not touched, none on which he has rested. With an understanding fertile, subtle, expansive, "quick, forgetive, apprehensive," beyond all living precedent, few traces of it will perhaps remain. He lends himself to all impressions alike; he gives up his mind and liberty of thought to none. He is a general lover of art and science, and wedded to no one in particular. He pursues knowledge as a mistress, with outstretched hands and winged speed; but as he is about to embrace her, his Daphne turns—alas! not to a laurel! Hardly a speculation has been left on record from the earliest time, but it is loosely folded up in Mr. Coleridge's memory, like a rich, but somewhat tattered piece of tapestry: we might add (with more seeming than real extravagance) that scarce a thought can pass through the mind of man, but its sound has at some time or other passed over his head with rustling pinions.

On whatever question or author you speak, he is prepared to take up the theme with advantage—from Peter Abelard down to Thomas Moore, from the subtlest metaphysics to the politics of the *Courier*. There is no

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man of genius, in whose praise he descants, but the critic seems to stand above the author, and "what in him is weak, to strengthen, what is low, to raise and support:" nor is there any work of genius that does not come out of his hands like an illuminated Missal, sparkling even in its defects. If Mr. Coleridge had not been the most impressive talker of his age, he would probably have been the finest writer; but he lays down his pen to make sure of an auditor, and mortgages the admiration of posterity for the stare of an idler. If he had not been a poet, he would have been a powerful logician; if he had not dipped his wing in the Unitarian controversy, he might have soared to the very summit of fancy. But, in writing verse, he is trying to subject the Muse to *transcendental* theories: in his abstract reasoning, he misses his way by strewing it with flowers.

All that he has done of moment, he had done twenty years ago: since then, he may be said to have lived on the sound of his own voice. Mr. Coleridge is too rich in intellectual wealth, to need to task himself to any drudgery: he has only to draw the sliders of his imagination, and a thousand subjects expand before him, startling him with their brilliancy, or losing themselves in endless obscurity—

> "And by the force of blear illusion,
> They draw him on to his confusion."

What is the little he could add to the stock, compared with the countless stores that lie about him, that he should stoop to pick up a name, or to polish an idle fancy? He walks abroad in the majesty of an universal understanding, eyeing the "rich strond" or golden sky above him, and "goes sounding on his way," in eloquent accents, uncompelled and free!

Persons of the greatest capacity are often those, who

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for this reason do the least; for surveying themselves from the highest point of view, amidst the infinite variety of the universe, their own share in it seems trifling, and scarce worth a thought; and they prefer the contemplation of all that is, or has been, or can be, to the making a coil about doing what, when done, is no better than vanity. It is hard to concentrate all our attention and efforts on one pursuit, except from ignorance of others; and without this concentration of our faculties no great progress can be made in any one thing. It is not merely that the mind is not capable of the effort; it does not think the effort worth making. Action is one; but thought is manifold. He whose restless eye glances through the wide compass of nature and art, will not consent to have "his own nothings monstered:" but he must do this before he can give his whole soul to them. The mind, after "letting contemplation have its fill," or

> "Sailing with supreme dominion
> Through the azure deep of air,"

sinks down on the ground, breathless, exhausted, powerless, inactive; or if it must have some vent to its feelings, seeks the most easy and obvious; is soothed by friendly flattery, lulled by the murmur of immediate applause: thinks, as it were, aloud, and babbles in its dreams!

A scholar (so to speak) is a more disinterested and abstracted character than a mere author. The first looks at the numberless volumes of a library, and says, "All these are mine:" the other points to a single volume (perhaps it may be an immortal one) and says, "My name is written on the back of it." This is a puny and groveling ambition, beneath the lofty amplitude of Mr. Coleridge's mind. No, he revolves in his wayward soul,

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or utters to the passing wind, or discourses to his own shadow, things mightier and more various!—Let us draw the curtain, and unlock the shrine.

Learning rocked him in his cradle, and while yet a child,

"He lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

At sixteen he wrote his *Ode on Chatterton*, and he still reverts to that period with delight, not so much as it relates to himself (for that string of his own early promise of fame rather jars than otherwise) but as exemplifying the youth of a poet. Mr. Coleridge talks of himself without being an egotist; for in him the individual is always merged in the abstract and general. He distinguished himself at school and at the University by his knowledge of the classics, and gained several prizes for Greek epigrams. How many men are there (great scholars, celebrated names in literature) who, having done the same thing in their youth, have no other idea all the rest of their lives but of this achievement, of a fellowship and dinner, and who, installed in academic honours, would look down on our author as a mere strolling bard! At Christ's Hospital, where he was brought up, he was the idol of those among his schoolfellows, who mingled with their bookish studies the music of thought and of humanity; and he was usually attended round the cloisters by a group of these (inspiring and inspired) whose hearts even then burnt within them as he talked, and where the sounds yet linger to mock ELIA on his way, still turning pensive to the past![1]

One of the finest and rarest parts of Mr. Coleridge's conversation is, when he expatiates on the Greek trage-

[1] Referring probably to the paper "On Christ's Hospital thirty-five years ago," in Lamb's *Elia*, 1823.—ED.

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dians (not that he is not well acquainted, when he pleases, with the epic poets, or the philosophers, or orators, or historians of antiquity)—on the subtle reasonings and melting pathos of Euripides, on the harmonious gracefulness of Sophocles, tuning his love-laboured song, like sweetest warblings from a sacred grove; on the high-wrought, trumpet-tongued eloquence of Æschylus, whose *Prometheus*, above all, is like an Ode to Fate and a pleading with Providence, his thoughts being let loose as his body is chained on his solitary rock, and his afflicted will (the emblem of mortality)

"Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

As the impassioned critic speaks and rises in his theme, you would think you heard the voice of the Man hated by the Gods, contending with the wild winds as they roar; and his eye glitters with the spirit of Antiquity!

Next, he was engaged with Hartley's tribes of mind, "etherial braid, thought-woven,"—and he busied himself for a year or two with vibrations and vibratiuncles, and the great law of association that binds all things in its mystic chain, and the doctrine of Necessity (the mild teacher of Charity) and the Millennium, anticipative of a life to come; and he plunged deep into the controversy on Matter and Spirit, and, as an escape from Dr. Priestley's Materialism, where he felt himself imprisoned by the logician's spell, like Ariel in the cloven pine-tree, he became suddenly enamoured of Bishop Berkeley's fairy-world,[1] and used in all companies to

[1] Mr. Coleridge named his eldest son (the writer of some beautiful Sonnets) after Hartley, and the second after Berkeley. The third was called Derwent, after the river of that name. Nothing can be more characteristic of his mind than this circumstance. All his ideas indeed are like a river, flowing on for ever, and still murmuring as it flows, discharging its waters and still replenished—

"And so by many winding nooks it strays,
With willing sport to the wild ocean!"

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build the universe, like a brave poetical fiction, of fine words. And he was deep-read in Malebranche, and in Cudworth's Intellectual System (a huge pile of learning, unwieldy, enormous) and in Lord Brook's hieroglyphic theories, and in Bishop Butler's Sermons, and in the Duchess of Newcastle's fantastic folios, and in Clarke and South, and Tillotson, and all the fine thinkers and masculine reasoners of that age; and Leibnitz's *Pre-established Harmony* reared its arch above his head, like the rainbow in the cloud, covenanting with the hopes of man.

And then he fell plumb, ten thousand fathoms down (but his wings saved him harmless) into the *hortus siccus* of Dissent, where he pared religion down to the standard of reason, and stripped faith of mystery, and preached Christ crucified and the Unity of the Godhead, and so dwelt for a while in the spirit with John Huss and Jerome of Prague and Socinus and old John Zisca, and ran through Neal's History of the Puritans and Calamy's Non-Conformists' Memorial, having like thoughts and passions with them. But then Spinoza became his God, and he took up the vast chain of being in his hand, and the round world became the centre and the soul of all things in some shadowy sense, forlorn of meaning, and around him he beheld the living traces and the sky-pointing proportions of the mighty Pan; but poetry redeemed him from this spectral philosophy, and he bathed his heart in beauty, and gazed at the golden light of heaven, and drank of the spirit of the universe, and wandered at eve by fairy-stream or fountain,

> "——— When he saw nought but beauty,
> When he heard the voice of that Almighty One
> In every breeze that blew, or wave that murmured "—

and wedded with truth in Plato's shade, and in the

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writings of Proclus and Plotinus saw the ideas of things in the eternal mind, and unfolded all mysteries with the Schoolmen and fathomed the depths of Duns Scotus and Thomas Aquinas, and entered the third heaven with Jacob Behmen, and walked hand in hand with Swedenborg through the pavilions of the New Jerusalem, and sang his faith in the promise and in the word in his *Religious Musings*.

And lowering himself from that dizzy height, [he] poised himself on Milton's wings, and spread out his thoughts in charity with the glad prose of Jeremy Taylor, and wept over Bowles's Sonnets, and studied Cowper's blank verse, and betook himself to Thomson's Castle of Indolence, and sported with the wits of Charles the Second's days and of Queen Anne, and relished Swift's style and that of the John Bull (Arbuthnot's we mean, not Mr. Croker's), and dallied with the British Essayists and Novelists, and knew all qualities of more modern writers with a learned spirit: Johnson, and Goldsmith, and Junius, and Burke, and Godwin, and the Sorrows of Werter, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire, and Marivaux, and Crebillon, and thousands more: now "laughed with Rabelais in his easy chair" or pointed to Hogarth, or afterwards dwelt on Claude'e classic scenes, or spoke with rapture of Raphael, and compared the women at Rome to figures that had walked out of his pictures, or visited the Oratory of Pisa, and described the works of Giotto and Ghirlandaio and Massaccio, and gave the moral of the picture of the Triumph of Death, where the beggars and the wretched invoke his dreadful dart, but the rich and mighty of the earth quail and shrink before it; and in that land of siren sights and sounds, saw a dance of peasant girls, and was charmed with lutes and gondolas,—or wandered into Germany and lost himself in

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the labyrinths of the Hartz Forest and of the Kantean philosophy,[1] and amongst the cabalistic names of Fichtè and Schelling and Lessing, and God knows who. This was long after; but all the former while he had nerved his heart and filled his eyes with tears, as he hailed the rising orb of liberty, since quenched in darkness and in blood, and had kindled his affections at the blaze of the French Revolution, and sang for joy, when the towers of the Bastille and the proud places of the insolent and the oppressor fell, and would have floated his bark, freighted with fondest fancies, across the Atlantic wave with Southey and others to seek for peace and freedom—

"In Philarmonia's undivided dale!"[2]

Alas! "Frailty, thy name is *Genius!*"—What is become of all this mighty heap of hope, of thought, of learning and humanity? It has ended in swallowing doses of oblivion and in writing paragraphs in the *Courier*. Such and so little is the mind of man!

It was not to be supposed that Mr. Coleridge could keep on at the rate he set off. He could not realize all he knew or thought, and less could not fix his desultory ambition. Other stimulants supplied the place, and kept up the intoxicating dream, the fever and the madness of his early impressions. Liberty (the philosopher's and the poet's bride) had fallen a victim, meanwhile, to the murderous practices of the hag Legitimacy. Proscribed by court-hirelings, too romantic for the herd of vulgar politicians, our enthusiast stood at bay, and at last turned on the pivot of a subtle casuistry to the *unclean side:* but his discursive reason would not let him trammel himself into a poet-laureate or stamp-

[1] See the paper "Coleridge Abroad" in *Offspring of Thought in Solitude*, by W. C. Hazlitt.—Ed.

[2] See W. C. Hazlitt's *Mary and Charles Lamb*, 1874, p. 151.—Ed.

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distributor;[1] and he stopped, ere he had quite passed that well-known "bourne from whence no traveller returns"—and so has sunk into torpid, uneasy repose, tantalized by useless resources, haunted by vain imaginings, his lips idly moving, but his heart for ever still, or, as the shattered chords vibrate of themselves, making melancholy music to the ear of memory! Such is the fate of genius in an age when, in the unequal contest with sovereign wrong, every man is ground to powder who is not either a born slave, or who does not willingly and at once offer up the yearnings of humanity and the dictates of reason as a welcome sacrifice to besotted prejudice and loathsome power.

Of all Mr. Coleridge's productions, the *Ancient Mariner* is the only one that we could with confidence put into any person's hands, on whom we wished to impress a favourable idea of his extraordinary powers. Let whatever other objections be made to it, it is unquestionably a work of genius—of wild, irregular, overwhelming imagination, and has that rich, varied movement in the verse, which gives a distant idea of the lofty or changeful tones of Mr. Coleridge's voice. In the *Christobel*, there is one splendid passage on divided friendship. The Translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein* is also a masterly production in its kind, faithful and spirited. Among his smaller pieces there are occasional bursts of pathos and fancy, equal to what we might expect from him; but these form the exception, and not the rule. Such, for instance, is his affecting Sonnet to the author of the *Robbers*.

> "Schiller! that hour I would have wish'd to die,
> If through the shudd'ring midnight I had sent
> From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent,
> That fearful voice, a famish'd father's cry—

[1] In allusion to Southey and Wordsworth.—Ed.

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That in no after-moment aught less vast
Might stamp me mortal! A triumphant shout
Black horror scream'd, and all her goblin rout
From the more with'ring scene diminish'd pass'd.

"Ah! Bard tremendous in sublimity!
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wand'ring at eve, with finely frenzied eye,
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood!
Awhile, with mute awe gazing, I would brood,
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy."

His Tragedy, entitled *Remorse*, is full of beautiful and striking passages; but it does not place the author in the first rank of dramatic writers. But if Mr. Coleridge's works do not place him in that rank, they injure instead of conveying a just idea of the man; for he himself is certainly in the first class of general intellect.

If our author's poetry is inferior to his conversation, his prose is utterly abortive. Hardly a gleam is to be found in it of the brilliancy and richness of those stores of thought and language that he pours out incessantly, when they are lost like drops of water in the ground. The principal work, in which he has attempted to embody his general views of things, is the FRIEND, of which, though it contains some noble passages and fine trains of thought, prolixity and obscurity are the most frequent characteristics.

No two persons can be conceived more opposite in character or genius than the subject of the present and of the preceding sketch. Mr. Godwin, with less natural capacity and with fewer acquired advantages, by concentrating his mind on some given object, and doing what he had to do with all his might, has accomplished much, and will leave more than one monument of a powerful intellect behind him; Mr. Coleridge, by dissipating his, and dallying with every subject by turns,

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has done little or nothing to justify to the world or to posterity the high opinion which all who have ever heard him converse, or known him intimately, with one accord entertain of him. Mr. Godwin's faculties have kept at home, and plied their task in the workshop of the brain, diligently and effectually: Mr. Coleridge's have gossiped away their time, and gadded about from house to house, as if life's business were to melt the hours in listless talk. Mr. Godwin is intent on a subject, only as it concerns himself and his reputation; he works it out as a matter of duty, and discards from his mind whatever does not forward his main object as impertinent and vain.

Mr. Coleridge, on the other hand, delights in nothing but episodes and digressions, neglects whatever he undertakes to perform, and can act only on spontaneous impulses without object or method. "He cannot be constrained by mastery." While he should be occupied with a given pursuit, he is thinking of a thousand other things: a thousand tastes, a thousand objects tempt him, and distract his mind, which keeps open house, and entertains all comers; and after being fatigued and amused with morning calls from idle visitors, [he] finds the day consumed and its business unconcluded. Mr. Godwin, on the contrary, is somewhat exclusive and unsocial in his habits of mind, entertains no company but what he gives his whole time and attention to, and wisely writes over the doors of his understanding, his fancy, and his senses—"No admittance except on business." He has none of that fastidious refinement and false delicacy, which might lead him to balance between the endless variety of modern attainments. He does not throw away his life (nor a single half hour of it) in adjusting the claims of different accomplishments, and in choosing between them or making himself master of

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them all. He sets about his task (whatever it may be), and goes through it with spirit and fortitude. He has the happiness to think an author the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest author in it.

Mr. Coleridge, in writing an harmonious stanza, would stop to consider whether there was not more grace and beauty in a *Pas de trois*, and would not proceed till he had resolved this question by a chain of metaphysical reasoning without end. Not so Mr. Godwin. That is best to him, which he can do best. He does not waste himself in vain aspirations and effeminate sympathies. He is blind, deaf, insensible to all but the trump of Fame. Plays, operas, painting, music, ball-rooms, wealth, fashion, titles, lords, ladies, touch him not. All these are no more to him than to the magician in his cell, and he writes on to the end of the chapter through good report and evil report. *Pingo in eternitatem* is his motto. He neither envies nor admires what others are, but is contented to be what he is, and strives to do the utmost he can. Mr. Coleridge has flirted with the Muses as with a set of mistresses: Mr. Godwin has been married twice, to Reason and to Fancy, and has to boast no short-lived progeny by each.

So to speak, he has *valves* belonging to his mind, to regulate the quantity of gas admitted into it, so that like the bare, unsightly, but well-compacted steam-vessel, it cuts its liquid way, and arrives at its promised end: while Mr. Coleridge's bark, "taught with the little nautilus to sail," the sport of every breath, dancing to every wave,

> "Youth at its prow, and Pleasure at its helm,"

flutters its gaudy pennons in the air, glitters in the sun, but we wait in vain to hear of its arrival in the destined harbour. Mr. Godwin, with less variety and vividness,

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with less subtlety and susceptibility both of thought and feeling, has had firmer nerves, a more determined purpose, a more comprehensive grasp of his subject; and the results are as we find them. Each has met with his reward: for justice has, after all, been done to the pretensions of each; and we must, in all cases, use means to ends![1]

It was a misfortune to any man of talent to be born in the latter end of the last century. Genius stopped the way of Legitimacy, and therefore it was to be abated, crushed, or set aside as a nuisance. The spirit of the monarchy was at variance with the spirit of the age. The flame of liberty, the light of intellect, was to be extinguished with the sword—or with slander, whose edge is sharper than the sword. The war between power and reason was carried on by the first of these abroad, by the last at home. No quarter was given (then or now) by the Government-critics, the authorized censors of the press, to those who followed the dictates of independence, who listened to the voice of the tempter Fancy. Instead of gathering fruits and flowers, immortal fruits and amaranthine flowers, they soon found themselves beset not only by a host of prejudices, but assailed with all the engines of power: by nicknames, by lies, by all the arts of malice, interest and hypocrisy, without the possibility of their defending themselves "from the pelting of the pitiless storm," that poured down upon them from the strongholds of corruption and authority.

The philosophers, the dry abstract reasoners, submitted to this reverse pretty well, and armed themselves with patience "as with triple steel," to bear discomfiture, persecution, and disgrace. But the poets, the

[1] Here, in the first edition, the paper on Coleridge concluded.—Ed.

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creatures of sympathy, could not stand the frowns both of king and people. They did not like to be shut out when places and pensions, when the critic's praises, and the laurel wreath were about to be distributed. They did not stomach being *sent to Coventry*, and Mr. Coleridge sounded a retreat for them by the help of casuistry and a musical voice.—"His words were hollow, but they pleased the ear" of his friends of the Lake School, who turned back disgusted and panic-struck from the dry desert of unpopularity, like Hassan the camel-driver,

> "And curs'd the hour, and curs'd the luckless day,
> When first from Shiraz' walls they bent their way."

They are safely inclosed there. But Mr. Coleridge did not enter with them; pitching his tent upon the barren waste without, and having no abiding place nor city of refuge!

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REV. MR. IRVING.

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REV. MR. IRVING.[1]

THIS gentleman has gained an almost unprecedented, and not an altogether unmerited popularity as a preacher. As he is, perhaps, though a burning and a shining light, not "one of the fixed," we shall take this opportunity of discussing his merits, while he is at his meridian height, and in doing so, shall "nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice."

Few circumstances show the prevailing and preposterous rage for novelty in a more striking point of view than the success of Mr. Irving's oratory. People go to hear him in crowds, and come away with a mixture of delight and astonishment. They go again to see if the effect will continue, and send others to try to find out the mystery; and in the noisy conflict between extravagant encomiums and splenetic objections, the true secret escapes observation—which is, that the whole thing is, nearly from beginning to end, a *transposition of ideas*. If the subject of these remarks had come out as a player, with all his advantages of figure, voice, and action, we think he would have failed; if, as a preacher, he had kept within the strict bounds of pulpit-oratory, he would

[1] Compare Hazlitt's paper in the *Liberal*, 1823, on "Pulpit Oratory, Dr. Chalmers and Mr. Irving." "While he was at Glasgow [in May, 1822], he attended St. John's Church, for the sake of hearing Dr. Chalmers preach. 'We never saw,' he says, 'fuller attendances or more profound attention. It was like a sea of eyes, a swarm of heads, gaping for mysteries, and staring for elucidations.'"—*Memoirs of W. Hazlitt*, by W. C. Hazlitt, 1867, ii. 42.—ED.

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scarcely have been much distinguished among his Calvinistic brethren. As a mere author, he would have excited attention rather by his quaintness and affectation of an obsolete style and mode of thinking than by anything else. But he has contrived to jumble these several characters together in an unheard-of and unwarranted manner, and the fascination is altogether irresistible.

Our Caledonian divine is equally an anomally in religion, in literature, in personal appearance; and in public speaking. To hear a person spout Shakspeare on the stage is nothing—the charm is nearly worn out—but to hear anyone spout Shakspeare (and that not in a sneaking under-tone, but at the top of his voice and with the full breadth of his chest) from a Calvinistic pulpit, is new and wonderful. The *Fancy* have lately lost something of their gloss in public estimation; and, after the last fight,[1] few would go far to see a Neate or a Spring set-to. But to see a man who is able to enter the ring with either of them, or brandish a quarter-staff with Friar Tuck, or a broad-sword with Shaw the Lifeguardsman,[2] stand up in a strait-laced old-fashioned pulpit, and bandy dialectics with modern philosophers, or give a *cross-buttock* to a cabinet minister, there is something in a sight like this also, that is a cure for sore eyes. It is as if Crib or Molyneux had turned Methodist parson, or as if a Patagonian savage were to come forward as the patron-saint of Evangelical religion.

Again, the doctrine of eternal punishment was one of

[1] See *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, ii. 73, where the fight is described at great length.—Ed.

[2] Shaw was also a pugilist. He fought with his regiment at Waterloo. I have heard him described as a splendid fellow. Moore, in his *Tom Cribb's Memorial to Congress*, refers to him, where he apostrophizes the "Shade of the Cheesemonger." Shaw was originally in that business.—Ed.

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the staple arguments with which, everlastingly drawled out, the old school of Presbyterian divines used to keep their audiences awake, or lull them to sleep; but to which people of taste and fashion paid little attention, as inelegant and barbarous, till Mr. Irving, with his cast-iron features and sledge-hammer blows, puffing like a grim Vulcan, set to work to forge more classic thunderbolts, and kindle the expiring flames anew with the very sweepings of sceptical and infidel libraries, so as to excite a pleasing horror in the female part of his congregation. In short, our popular declaimer has, contrary to the Scripture-caution, put new wine into old bottles, or new cloth on old garments. He has, with an unlimited and daring licence, mixed the sacred and the profane together, the carnal and the spiritual man, the petulance of the bar with the dogmatism of the pulpit, the theatrical and theological, the modern and the obsolete;—what wonder that this splendid piece of patchwork, splendid by contradiction and contrast, has delighted some and confounded others?

The more serious part of his congregation indeed complain, though not bitterly, that their pastor has converted their meeting-house into a play-house: but when a lady of quality, introducing herself and her three daughters to the preacher, assures him that they have been to all the most fashionable places of resort, the opera, the theatre, assemblies, Miss Macaulay's readings, and Exeter-Change, and have been equally entertained nowhere else, we apprehend that no remonstrances of a committee of ruling-elders will be able to bring him to his senses again, or make him forego such sweet, but ill-assorted praise. What we mean to insist upon is, that Mr. Irving owes his triumphant success, not to any one quality for which he has been extolled, but to a combination of qualities, the more striking in their immediate

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effect, in proportion as they are unlooked-for and heterogeneous, like the violent opposition of light and shade in a picture. We shall endeavour to explain this view of the subject more at large.

Mr. Irving, then, is no common or mean man. He has four or five qualities, possessed in a moderate or in a paramount degree, which, added or multiplied together, fill up the important space he occupies in the public eye. Mr. Irving's intellect itself is of a superior order; he has undoubtedly both talents and acquirements beyond the ordinary run of every-day preachers. These alone, however, we hold, would not account for a twentieth part of the effect he has produced: they would have lifted him perhaps out of the mire and slough of sordid obscurity, but would never have launched him into the ocean-stream of popularity, in which he "lies floating many a rood;"—but to these he adds uncommon height, a graceful figure and action, a clear and powerful voice, a striking, if not a fine face, a bold and fiery spirit, and a most portentous obliquity of vision, which throw him to an immeasurable distance beyond all competition, and effectually relieve whatever there might be of common-place or bombast in his style of composition. Put the case that Mr. Irving had been five feet high—Would he ever have been heard of, or, as he does now, have "bestrode the world like a Colossus?"

No, the thing speaks for itself. He would in vain have lifted his Liliputian arm to Heaven; people would have laughed at his monkey-tricks. Again, had he been as tall as he is, but had wanted other recommendations, he would have been nothing.

> "The player's province they but vainly try,
> Who want these powers, deportment, voice, and eye."

Conceive a rough, ugly, shock-headed Scotchman, stand-

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ing up in the Caledonian chapel, and dealing "damnation round the land" in a broad northern dialect and with a harsh, screaking voice, what ear polite, what smile serene would have hailed the barbarous prodigy, or not consigned him to utter neglect and derision? But the Rev. Edward Irving, with all his native wildness, "hath a smooth aspect framed to make women" saints; his very unusual size and height are carried off and moulded into elegance by the most admirable symmetry of form and ease of gesture; his sable locks, his clear iron-grey complexion and firm-set features turn the raw, uncouth Scotchman into the likeness of a noble Italian picture; and even his distortion of sight only redeems the otherwise "faultless monster" within the bounds of humanity, and, when admiration is exhausted and curiosity ceases, excites a new interest by leading to the idle question whether it is an advantage to the preacher or not. Farther, give him all his actual and remarkable advantages of body and mind, let him be as tall, as straight, as dark and clear of skin, as much at his ease, as silver-tongued, as eloquent and as argumentative as he is, yet with all these, and without a little charlatanry to set them off, he had been nothing. He might, keeping within the rigid line of his duty and professed calling, have preached on for ever; he might have divided the old-fashioned doctrines of election, grace, reprobation, predestination, into his sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth heads, and his *lastly* have been looked for as a "consummation devoutly to be wished;" he might have defied the devil and all his works, and by the help of a loud voice and strong-set person—

"A lusty man to ben an Abbot able;"—

have increased his own congregation, and been quoted among the godly as a powerful preacher of the word;

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but, in addition to this, he went out of his way to attack Jeremy Bentham; and the town was up in arms. The thing was new. He thus wiped the stain of musty ignorance and formal bigotry out of his style.

Mr. Irving must have something superior in him, to look over the shining close-packed heads of his congregation to have a hit at the *Great Jurisconsult* in his study. He next, ere the report of the former blow had subsided, made a lunge at Mr. Brougham, and glanced an eye at Mr. Canning; *mystified* Mr. Coleridge, and *stultified* Lord Liverpool in his place—in the Gallery. It was rare sport to see him, "like an eagle in a dove-cote, flutter the Volscians in Corioli." He has found out the secret of attracting by repelling. Those whom he is likely to attack are curious to hear what he says of them: they go again, to show that they do not mind it. It is no less interesting to the bystanders, who like to witness this sort of *onslaught*—like a charge of cavalry—the shock and the resistance. Mr. Irving has in fact, without leave asked or a licence granted, converted the Caledonian Chapel into a Westminster Forum or Debating Society, with the sanctity of religion added to it. Our spirited polemic is not contented to defend the citadel of orthodoxy against all impugners, and shut himself up in texts of Scripture and huge volumes of the Commentators as an impregnable fortress. He merely makes use of the stronghold of religion as a resting-place, from which he sallies forth, armed with modern topics and with penal fire, like Achilles of old rushing from the Grecian tents against the adversaries of God and man.

Peter Aretine is said to have laid the Princes of Europe under contribution by penning satires against them; so Mr. Irving keeps the public in awe by insulting all their favourite idols. He does not spare their poli-

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ticians, their rulers, their moralists, their poets, their players, their critics, their reviewers, their magazine-writers; he levels their resorts of business, their places of amusement, at a blow—their cities, churches, palaces, ranks and professions, refinements and elegances—and leaves nothing standing but himself, a mighty landmark in a degenerate age, overlooking the wide havoc he has made! He makes war upon all arts and sciences, upon the faculties and nature of man, on his vices and his virtues, on all existing institutions, and all possible improvements, that nothing may be left but the Kirk of Scotland, and that he may be the head of it. He literally sends a challenge to all London in the name of the KING of HEAVEN, to evacuate its streets, to disperse its population, to lay aside its employments, to burn its wealth, renounce its vanities and pomp; and for what?—that he may enter in as the *King of Glory;* or after enforcing his threat with the battering-ram of logic, the grape-shot of rhetoric, and the cross-fire of his double vision, reduce the British metropolis to a Scottish heath, with a few miserable hovels upon it, where they may worship God according to *the root of the matter*, and where an old man with a blue bonnet, a fair-haired girl, and a little child would form the flower of his flock!

Such is the pretension and the boast of this new Peter the Hermit, who would get rid of all we have done in the way of improvement on a state of barbarous ignorance or still more barbarous prejudice, in order to begin again on a *tabula rasa* of Calvinism, and have a world of his own making. It is not very surprising, when nearly the whole mass and texture of civil society is indicted as a nuisance, and threatened to be pulled down as a rotten building ready to fall on the heads of the inhabitants, that all classes of people run to hear the crash, and to see the engines and levers at

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work which are to effect this laudable purpose. What else can be the meaning of our preacher taking upon himself to denounce the sentiments of the most serious professors in great cities, as vitiated and stark-naught, of relegating religion to his native glens, and pretending that the hymn of praise or the sigh of contrition cannot ascend acceptably to the throne of grace from the crowded street as well as from the barren rock or silent valley? Why put this affront upon his hearers? Why belie his own aspirations?

> "God made the country, and man made the town."

So says the poet; does Mr. Irving say so? If he does, and finds the air of the city death to his piety, why does he not return home again? But if he can breathe it with impunity, and still retain the fervour of his early enthusiasm, and the simplicity and purity of the faith that was once delivered to the saints, why not extend the benefit of his own experience to others, instead of taunting them with a vapid pastoral theory?

Or, if our popular and eloquent divine finds a change in himself, that flattery prevents the growth of grace, that he is becoming the God of his own idolatry by being that of others, that the glittering of coronet-coaches rolling down Holborn Hill to Hatton Garden, that titled beauty, that the parliamentary complexion of his audience, the compliments of poets, and the stare of peers discompose his wandering thoughts a little; and yet that he cannot give up these strong temptations tugging at his heart: why not extend more charity to others, and show more candour in speaking of himself? There is either a good deal of bigoted intolerance with a deplorable want of self-knowledge in all this, or at least an equal degree of cant and quackery.

To whichever cause we are to attribute this hyper-

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bolical tone, we hold it certain he could not have adopted it, if he had been *a little man*. But his imposing figure and dignified manner enable him to hazard sentiments or assertions that would be fatal to others. His controversial daring is *backed* by his bodily prowess; and by bringing his intellectual pretensions boldly into a line with his physical accomplishments, he, indeed, presents a very formidable front to the sceptic or the scoffer. Take a cubit from his stature, and his whole manner resolves itself into an impertinence. But with that addition, he *overcrows* the town, browbeats their prejudices, and bullies them out of their senses, and is not afraid of being contradicted by any one *less than himself*. It may be said, that individuals with great personal defects have made a considerable figure as public speakers; and Mr. Wilberforce, among others, may be held out as an instance. Nothing can be more insignificant as to mere outward appearance, and yet he is listened to in the House of Commons.

But he does not wield it, he does not insult or bully it. He leads by following opinion, he trims, he shifts, he glides on the silvery sounds of his undulating, flexible, cautiously modulated voice, winding his way betwixt heaven and earth, now courting popularity, now calling servility to his aid, and with a large estate, the "saints," and the population of Yorkshire to swell his influence, never venturing on the forlorn hope, or doing anything more than "hitting the house between wind and water." Yet he is probably a cleverer man than Mr. Irving.

There is a Mr. Fox,[1] a Dissenting Minister, as fluent a speaker, with a sweeter voice and a more animated and beneficent countenance than Mr. Irving, who expresses himself with manly spirit at a public meeting,

[1] W. J. Fox, Member for Oldham.—Ed.

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takes a hand at whist, and is the darling of his congregation; but he is no more, because he is diminutive in person. His head is not seen above the crowd the length of a street off. He is the Duke of Sussex in miniature, but the Duke of Sussex does not go to hear him preach, as he attends Mr. Irving, who rises up against him like a martello tower, and is nothing loth to confront the spirit of a man of genius with the blood-royal. We allow there are, or may be, talents sufficient to produce this equality without a single personal advantage; but we deny that this would be the effect of any that our great preacher possesses. We conceive it not improbable that the consciousness of muscular power, that the admiration of his person by strangers might first have inspired Mr. Irving with an ambition to be something, intellectually speaking, and have given him confidence to attempt the greatest things. He has not failed for want of courage. The public, as well as the fair, are won by a show of gallantry.

Mr. Irving has shrunk from no opinion, however paradoxical. He has scrupled to avow no sentiment, however obnoxious. He has revived exploded prejudices, he has scouted prevailing fashions. He has opposed the spirit of the age, and not consulted the *esprit de corps*. He has brought back the doctrines of Calvinism in all their inveteracy, and relaxed the inveteracy of his northern accents. He has turned religion and the Caledonian Chapel topsy-turvy. He has held a play-book in one hand and a Bible in the other, and quoted Shakspeare and Melancthon in the same breath. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is no longer, with his grafting, a dry withered stump; it shoots its branches to the skies, and hangs out its blossoms to the gale—

"Miraturque novos fructus, et non sua poma."

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He has taken the thorns and briars of scholastic divinity, and garlanded them with the flowers of modern literature. He has done all this, relying on the strength of a remarkably fine person and manner, and through that he has succeeded—otherwise he would have perished miserably.

Dr. Chalmers is not by any means so good a looking man, nor so accomplished a speaker as Mr. Irving; yet he at one time almost equalled his oratorical celebrity, and certainly paved the way for him. He has therefore more merit than his admired pupil, as he has done as much with fewer means. He has more scope of intellect and more intensity of purpose. Both his matter and his manner, setting aside his face and figure, are more impressive. Take the volume of "Sermons on Astronomy," by Dr. Chalmers, and the "Four Orations for the Oracles of God" which Mr. Irving lately published, and we apprehend there can be no comparison as to their success. The first ran like wild-fire through the country, were the darlings of watering-places, were laid in the windows of inns,[1] and were to be met with in all places of public resort; while the "Orations" get on but slowly, on Milton's stilts, and are pompously announced as in a Third Edition.

We believe the fairest and fondest of his admirers would rather see and hear Mr. Irving than read him. The reason is, that the groundwork of his compositions is trashy and hackneyed, though set off by extravagant metaphors and an affected phraseology; that, without the turn of his head and wave of his hand, his periods

[1] We remember finding the volume in the orchard at Burford-bridge near Boxhill, and passing a whole and very delightful morning in reading it, without quitting the shade of an apple-tree. We have not been able to pay Mr. Irving's book the same compliment of reading it at a sitting.

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have nothing in them; and that he himself is the only *idea* with which he has as yet enriched the public mind! He must play off his person, as Orator Henley used to dazzle his hearers with his diamond-ring. The small frontispiece prefixed to the "Orations" does not serve to convey an adequate idea of the magnitude of the man, nor of the ease and freedom of his motions in the pulpit. How different is Dr. Chalmers! He is like "a monkey-preacher" to the other. He cannot boast of personal appearance to set him off. But then he is like the very genius or demon of theological controversy personified. He has neither airs nor graces at command; he thinks nothing of himself: he has nothing theatrical about him (which cannot be said of his successor and rival); but you see a man in mortal throes and agony with doubts and difficulties, seizing stubborn knotty points with his teeth, tearing them with his hands, and straining his eyeballs till they almost start out of their sockets, in pursuit of a train of visionary reasoning, like a Highland-seer with his second sight.

The description of Balfour of Burley in his cave, with his Bible in one hand and his sword in the other, contending with the imaginary enemy of mankind, gasping for breath, and with the cold moisture running down his face, gives a lively idea of Dr. Chalmers's prophetic fury in the pulpit. If we could have looked in to have seen Burley hard-beset "by the coinage of his heat-oppressed brain," who would have asked whether he was a handsome man or not? It would be enough to see a man haunted by a spirit, under the strong and entire dominion of a wilful hallucination. So the integrity and vehemence of Dr. Chalmers's manner, the determined way in which he gives himself up to his subject, or lays about him and buffets sceptics and gainsayers, arrests attention in spite of every other circumstance,

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and fixes it on that, and that alone, which excites such interest and such eagerness in his own breast! Besides, he is a logician, has a theory in support of whatever he chooses to advance, and weaves the tissue of his sophistry so close and intricate, that it is difficult not to be entangled in it, or to escape from it. "There's magic in the web."

Whatever appeals to the pride of the human understanding, has a subtle charm in it. The mind is naturally pugnacious, cannot refuse a challenge of strength or skill, sturdily enters the lists and resolves to conquer, or to yield itself vanquished in the forms. This is the chief hold Dr. Chalmers had upon his hearers, and upon the readers of his "Astronomical Discourses." No one was satisfied with his arguments, no one could answer them; but every one wanted to try what he could make of them, as we try to find out a riddle. "By his so potent art," the art of laying down problematical premises, and drawing from them still more doubtful, but not impossible, conclusions, "he could bedim the noonday sun, betwixt the green sea and the azure vault set roaring war," and almost compel the stars in their courses to testify to his opinions. The mode in which he undertook to make the circuit of the universe, and demand categorical information "now of the planetary and now of the fixed," might put one in mind of Hecate's mode of ascending in a machine from the stage, "midst troops of spirits," in which you now admire the skill of the artist, and next tremble for the fate of the performer, fearing that the audacity of the attempt will turn his head or break his neck.

The style of these "Discourses" also, though not elegant or poetical, was, like the subject, intricate and endless. It was that of a man pushing his way through a labyrinth of difficulties, and determined not to flinch. The impression on the reader was proportionate; for,

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whatever were the merits of the style or matter, both were new and striking; and the train of thought that was unfolded at such length and with such strenuousness, was bold, well-sustained, and consistent with itself.

Mr. Irving wants the continuity of thought and manner which distinguishes his rival, and shines by patches and in bursts. He does not warm, or acquire increasing force or rapidity, with his progress. He is never hurried away by a deep or lofty enthusiasm, nor touches the highest point of genius or fanaticism; but "in the very storm and whirlwind of his passion, he acquires and begets a temperance that may give it smoothness." He has the self-possession and masterly execution of an experienced player or fencer, and does not seem to express his natural convictions, or to be engaged in a mortal struggle. This greater ease and indifference is the result of vast superiority of personal appearance, which "to be admired needs but to be seen," and does not require the possessor to work himself up into a passion, or to use any violent contortions to gain attention or to keep it.

These two celebrated preachers are in almost all respects an antithesis to each other. If Mr. Irving is an example of what can be done by the help of external advantages, Dr. Chalmers is a proof of what can be done without them. The one is most indebted to his mind, the other to his body. If Mr. Irving[1] inclines one to suspect fashionable or popular religion of a little *anthropomorphitism*, Dr. Chalmers effectually redeems it from that scandal.

[1] Mr. Henry Irving the playwright is, I believe, a descendant of this Scotish minister, and enjoys at present the full sunshine of popularity, like his predecessor. The latter fell as suddenly as he had risen. His eminence and celebrity were a mere passing distemper and whim.—Ed.

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MR. HORNE TOOKE.

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MR. HORNE TOOKE.[1]

MR. HORNE TOOKE was one of those who may be considered as connecting links between a former period and the existing generation. His education and accomplishments, nay, his political opinions, were of the last age: his mind and the tone of his feelings were *modern*. There was a hard, dry materialism in the very texture of his understanding, varnished over by the external refinements of the old school. Mr. Tooke had great scope of attainment and great versatility of pursuit; but the same shrewdness, quickness, cool self-possession, the same *literalness* of perception, and absence of passion and enthusiasm, characterised nearly all he did, said, or wrote. He was without a rival (almost) in private conversation, an expert public speaker, a keen politician, a first-rate grammarian, and the finest gentleman (to say the least) of his own party. He had no imagination (or he would not have scorned it!)—no delicacy of taste, no rooted prejudices or strong attachments: his intellect was like a bow of polished steel, from which he shot sharp-pointed poisoned arrows at his friends in private, at his enemies in public. His mind (so to speak) had no *religion* in it, and very little even of the moral qualities of genius; but he was a man of the world, a scholar bred, and a most acute and

[1] Compare this Character with the Essay *On the Diversions of Purley* in the Literary Remains, 1836, i., 333.—Ed.

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powerful logician. He was also a wit, and a formidable one: yet it may be questioned whether his wit was any thing more than an excess of his logical faculty: it did not consist in the play of fancy, but in close and cutting combinations of the understanding. "The law is open to every one: *so*," said Mr. Tooke, "*is the London Tavern!*"

It is the previous deduction formed in the mind, and the splenetic contempt felt for a practical sophism, that *beats about the bush for*, and at last finds, the apt illustration: not the casual, glancing coincidence of two objects, that points out an absurdity to the understanding. So, on another occasion, when Sir Allen Gardiner (who was a candidate for Westminster) had objected to Mr. Fox, that "he was always against the minister, *whether right or wrong*," and Mr. Fox, in his reply, had overlooked this slip of the tongue, Mr. Tooke immediately seized on it, and said, "he thought it at least an equal objection to Sir Allen, that he was always *with* the minister, whether right or wrong." This retort had all the effect, and produced the same surprise as the most brilliant display of wit or fancy: yet it was only the detecting a flaw in an argument, like a flaw in an indictment, by a kind of legal pertinacity, or rather by a rigid and constant habit of attending to the exact import of every word and clause in a sentence. Mr. Tooke had the mind of a lawyer; but it was applied to a vast variety of topics and general trains of speculation.

Mr. Horne Tooke was in private company, and among his friends, the finished gentleman of the last age. His manners were as fascinating as his conversation was spirited and delightful. He put one in mind of the burden of the song of "*The King's Old Courtier, and an old Courtier of the King's.*" He was, however, of the opposite party. It was curious to hear our modern

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sciolist advancing opinions of the most radical kind without any mixture of radical heat or violence, in a tone of fashionable *nonchalance*, with elegance of gesture and attitude, and with the most perfect good-humour.

In the spirit of opposition, or in the pride of logical superiority, he too often shocked the prejudices or wounded the self-love of those about him, while he himself displayed the same unmoved indifference or equanimity. He said the most provoking things with a laughing gaiety and a polite attention, that there was no withstanding. He threw others off their guard by thwarting their favourite theories, and then availed himself of the temperance of his own pulse to chafe them into madness. He had not one particle of deference for the opinion of others, nor of sympathy with their feelings; nor had he any obstinate convictions of his own to defend—

"Lord of himself, uncumbered with a *creed!*"

He took up any topic by chance, and played with it at will, like a juggler with his cups and balls.

He generally ranged himself on the losing side, and had rather an ill-natured delight in contradiction, and in perplexing the understandings of others, without leaving them any clue to guide them out of the labyrinth into which he had led them. He understood, in its perfection, the great art of throwing the *onus probandi* on his adversary, and so could maintain almost any opinion, however absurd or fantastical, with fearless impunity.

I have heard a sensible and well-informed man say, that he never was in company with Mr. Tooke without being delighted and surprised, or without feeling the conversation of every other person to be flat in the comparison; but that he did not recollect having ever heard him make a remark that struck him as a sound and true one, or that he himself appeared to think so. He

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used to plague Fuseli by asking him after the origin of the Teutonic dialects, and Dr. Parr, by wishing to know the meaning of the common copulative *Is.* Once at Godwin's, he defended Pitt from a charge of verbiage, and endeavoured to prove him superior to Fox. Some one imitated Pitt's manner, to show that it was monotonous, and he imitated him also, to show that it was not. He maintained (what would he not maintain ?) that young Betty's acting was finer than John Kemble's, and recited a passage from *Douglas* in the manner of each, to justify the preference he gave to the former. The mentioning this will please the living; it cannot hurt the dead. He argued on the same occasion and in the same breath, that Addison's style was without modulation, and that it was physically impossible for any one to write well, who was habitually silent in company. He sat like a king at his own table, and gave law to his guests—and to the world ! No man knew better how to manage his immediate circle, to foil or bring them out. A professed orator, beginning to address some observations to Mr. Tooke with a voluminous apology for his youth and inexperience, he said, " Speak up, young man ! "—and by taking him at his word, cut short the flower of orations. Porson was the only person of whom he stood in some degree of awe, on account of his prodigious memory and knowledge of his favourite subject, Languages. Sheridan, it has been remarked, said more good things, but had not an equal flow of pleasantry.

As an instance of Mr. Horne Tooke's extreme coolness and command of nerve, it has been mentioned that once at a public dinner, when he had got on the table to return thanks for his health being drunk with a glass of wine in his hand, and when there was a great clamour and opposition for some time, after it had subsided, he pointed to the glass to show that it was still full. Mr.

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Holcroft (the author of the *Road to Ruin*) was one of the most violent and fiery-spirited of all that motley crew of persons, who attended the Sunday meetings at Wimbledon. One day he was so enraged by some paradox or raillery of his host, that he indignantly rose from his chair, and said, "Mr. Tooke, you are a scoundrel!" His opponent, without manifesting the least emotion, replied, "Mr. Holcroft, when is it that I am to dine with you? shall it be next Thursday?"—"If you please, Mr. Tooke!" answered the angry philosopher, and sat down again. It was delightful to see him sometimes turn from these waspish or ludicrous altercations with over-weening antagonists to some old friend and veteran politician seated at his elbow; to hear him recall the time of Wilkes and Liberty, the conversation mellowing like the wine with the smack of age; assenting to all the old man said, bringing out his pleasant *traits*, and pampering him into childish self-importance, and sending him away thirty years younger than he came!

As a public or at least as a parliamentary speaker, Mr. Tooke did not answer the expectations that had been conceived of him, or probably that he had conceived of himself. It is natural for men to have felt a superiority over all those whom they happen to have encountered, to fancy that this superiority will continue, and that it will extend from individuals to public bodies. There is no rule in the case; or rather, the probability lies the contrary way. That which constitutes the excellence of conversation is of little use in addressing large assemblies of people; while other qualities are required that are hardly to be looked for in one and the same capacity.

The way to move great masses of men is to show that you yourself are moved. In a private circle, a ready

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repartee, a shrewd cross-question, ridicule and banter, a caustic remark or an amusing anecdote, whatever sets off the individual to advantage, or gratifies the curiosity or piques the self-love of the hearers, keeps attention alive and secures the triumph of the speaker. It is a personal contest, and depends on personal and momentary advantages. But, in appealing to the public, no one triumphs but in the triumph of some public cause, or by showing a sympathy with the general and predominant feelings of mankind. In a private room, a satirist, a sophist may provoke admiration by expressing his contempt for each of his adversaries in turn, and by setting their opinion at defiance; but when men are congregated together on a great public question and for a weighty object, they must be treated with more respect. They are touched with what affects themselves or the general weal, not with what flatters the vanity of the speaker; they must be moved altogether, if they are moved at all. They are impressed with gratitude for a luminous exposition of their claims or for zeal in their cause; and the lightning of generous indignation at bad men and bad measures is followed by thunders of applause—even in the House of Commons. But a man may sneer and cavil and puzzle and fly-blow every question that comes before him—be despised and feared by others, and admired by no one but himself.

He who thinks first of himself, either in the world or in a popular assembly, will be sure to turn attention away from his claims, instead of fixing it there. He must make common cause with his hearers. To lead, he must follow the general bias. Mr. Tooke did not therefore succeed as a speaker in Parliament. He stood aloof, he played antics, he exhibited his peculiar talent. While he was on his legs, the question before the House stood still; the only point at issue respected Mr. Tooke

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himself, his personal address and adroitness of intellect. Were there to be no more places and pensions, because Mr. Tooke's style was terse and epigrammatic? Were the Opposition benches to be inflamed to an unusual pitch of "sacred vehemence," because he gave them plainly to understand there was not a pin to choose between Ministers and Opposition? Would the House let him remain among them, because, if they turned him out on account of his *black coat*, Lord Camelford had threatened to send his *black servant* in his place? This was a good joke, but not a practical one. Would he gain the affections of the people out of doors, by scouting the question of reform? Would the King ever relish the old associate of Wilkes? What interest, then, what party did he represent? He represented nobody but himself.

He was an example of an ingenious man, a clever talker; but he was out of his place in the House of Commons, where people did not come (as in his own house) to admire or break a lance with him, but to get through the business of the day, and so adjourn! He wanted effect and *momentum*. Each of his sentences told very well in itself, but they did not altogether make a speech. He left off where he began. His eloquence was a succession of drops, not a stream. His arguments, though subtle and new, did not affect the main body of the question. The coldness and pettiness of his manner did not warm the hearts or expand the understandings of his hearers. Instead of encouraging, he checked the ardour of his friends; and teazed, instead of overpowering his antagonists. The only palpable hit he ever made, while he remained there, was the comparing his own situation in being rejected by the House, on account of the supposed purity of his clerical character, to the story of the girl at the Magdalen, who was told "she

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must turn out and qualify."[1] This met with laughter and loud applause. It was a *home* thrust, and the House (to do them justice) are obliged to any one who, by a smart blow, relieves them of the load of grave responsibility, which sits heavy on their shoulders.

At the hustings, or as an election-candidate, Mr. Tooke did better. There was no great question to move or carry; it was an affair of political *sparring* between himself and the other candidates. He took it in a very cool and leisurely manner, watched his competitors with a wary, sarcastic eye, picked up the mistakes or absurdities that fell from them, and retorted them on their heads: told a story to the mob; and smiled and took snuff with a gentlemanly and becoming air, as if he was already seated in the House.

But a Court of Law was the place where Mr. Tooke made the best figure in public. He might assuredly be said to be "native and endued unto that element." He had here to stand merely on the defensive: not to advance himself, but to block up the way: not to impress others, but to be himself impenetrable. All he wanted was *negative success;* and to this no one was better qualified to aspire. Cross purposes, *moot-points*, pleas, demurrers, flaws in the indictment, double meanings, cases, inconsequentialities, these were the playthings, the darlings of Mr. Tooke's mind; and with these he baffled the Judge, dumb-founded the Counsel, and outwitted the Jury. The report of his trial before Lord Kenyon is a masterpiece of acuteness, dexterity, modest assurance, and legal effect. It is much like his examination before the Commissioners of the Income-Tax—nothing could be got out of him in either case!

[1] "They receive him like a virgin at the Magdalen, *Go thou and do likewise.*"—JUNIUS.

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Mr. Tooke, as a political leader, belonged to the class of *trimmers;* or at most, it was his delight to make mischief and spoil sport. He would rather be *against* himself than *for* anybody else. He was neither a bold nor a safe leader. He enticed others into scrapes, and kept out of them himself. Provided he could say a clever or a spiteful thing, he did not care whether it served or injured the cause. Spleen or the exercise of intellectual power was the motive of his patriotism, rather than principle. He would talk treason with a saving clause, and instil sedition into the public mind, through the medium of a third (who was to be the responsible) party. He made Sir Francis Burdett his spokesman in the House and to the country, often venting his chagrin or singularity of sentiment at the expense of his friend; but what in the first was trick or reckless vanity, was in the last plain downright English honesty and singleness of heart.

In the case of the State Trials, in 1794, Mr. Tooke rather compromised his friends to screen himself. He kept repeating that "others might have gone on to Windsor, but he had stopped at Hounslow," as if to go farther might have been dangerous and unwarrantable. It was not the question how far he or others had actually gone, but how far they had a right to go, according to the law. His conduct was not the limit of the law, nor did treasonable excess begin where prudence or principle taught him to stop short, though this was the oblique inference liable to be drawn from his line of defence. Mr. Tooke was uneasy and apprehensive for the issue of the Government-prosecution while in confinement, and said, in speaking of it to a friend, with a morbid feeling and an emphasis quite unusual with him—"They want our blood—blood—blood!" It was somewhat ridiculous to implicate Mr. Tooke in a charge

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of High Treason; and indeed the whole charge was built on the mistaken purport of an intercepted letter relating to an engagement for a private dinner-party. His politics were not at all revolutionary. In this respect he was a mere pettifogger, full of chicane and captious objections, and unmeaning discontent; but he had none of the grand whirling movements of the French Revolution, nor of the tumultuous glow of rebellion in his head or in his heart.

His politics were cast in a different mould, or confined to the party distinctions and court-intrigues and pittances of popular right, that made a noise in the time of Junius and Wilkes; and, even if his understanding had gone along with more modern and unqualified principles, his cautious temper would have prevented his risking them in practice. Horne Tooke (though not of the same side in politics) had much of the tone of mind and more of the spirit of moral feeling of the celebrated philosopher of Malmesbury. The narrow scale and fine-drawn distinctions of his political creed made his conversation on such subjects infinitely amusing, particularly when contrasted with that of persons who dealt in the sounding *common-places* and sweeping clauses of abstract politics. He knew all the cabals and jealousies and heart-burnings in the beginning of the late reign, the changes of administration and the springs of secret influence, the characters of the leading men, Wilkes, Barrè, Dunning, Chatham, Burke, the Marquis of Rockingham, North, Shelburne, Fox, Pitt, and all the vacillating events of the American war:—these formed a curious background to the more prominent figures that occupied the present time, and Mr. Tooke worked out the minute details and touched in the evanescent *traits* with the pencil of a master. His conversation resembled a political *camera obscura*—as quaint as it was

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magical. To some pompous pretenders he might seem to narrate *fabellas aniles* (old wives' fables)—but not to those who study human nature, and wish to know the materials of which it is composed.

Mr. Tooke's faculties might appear to have ripened and acquired a finer flavour with age. In a former period of his life he was hardly the man he was latterly; or else he had greater abilities to contend against. He nowhere makes so poor a figure as in his controversy with Junius. He has evidently the best of the argument, yet he makes nothing out of it. He tells a long story about himself without wit or point in it, and whines and whimpers like a school-boy under the rod of his master. Junius, after bringing a hasty charge against him, has not a single fact to adduce in support of it; but keeps his ground and fairly beats his adversary out of the field by the mere force of style. One would think that "Parson Horne" knew who Junius was, and was afraid of him. "Under him his genius is quite rebuked." With the best cause to defend, he comes off more shabbily from the contest than any other person in the LETTERS, except Sir William Draper, who is the very hero of defeat.

The great thing which Mr. Horne Tooke has done, and which he has left behind him to posterity, is his work on Grammar, oddly enough entitled THE DIVERSIONS OF PURLEY.[1] Many people have taken it up as a description of a game, others supposing it to be a novel. It is, in truth, one of the few philosophical works on Grammar that were ever written. The essence of it (and, indeed, almost all that is really valuable in it) is contained in his *Letter to Dunning*, published about the

[1] So called from having been partly written at Purley, in Surrey, the residence of his friend and benefactor, Mr. Tooke, whose name he *took*.—ED.

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year 1775.[1] Mr. Tooke's work is truly elementary. Dr. Lowth described Mr. Harris's *Hermes* as "the finest specimen of analysis since the days of Aristotle"—a work in which there is no analysis at all, for analysis consists in reducing things to their principles, and not in endless details and subdivisions. Mr. Harris multiplies distinctions, and confounds his readers. Mr. Tooke clears away the rubbish of school-boy technicalities, and strikes at the root of his subject.

In accomplishing this arduous task, he was, perhaps, aided not more by the strength and resources of his mind than by its limits and defects. There is a web of old associations wound round language, that is a kind of veil over its natural features; and custom puts on the mask of ignorance. But this veil, this mask the author of *The Diversions of Purley* threw aside, and penetrated to the naked truth of things by the literal, matter-of-fact, unimaginative nature of his understanding, and because he was not subject to prejudices or illusions of any kind. Words may be said to "bear a charmed life, that must not yield to one of woman born"—with womanish weaknesses and confused apprehensions. But this charm was broken in the case of Mr. Tooke, whose mind was the reverse of effeminate—hard, unbending, concrete, physical, half-savage; and who saw language stripped of the clothing of habit or sentiment, or the disguises of doting pedantry, naked in its cradle, and in its primitive state. Our author tells us that he found his discovery on Grammar among a number of papers on other subjects, which he had thrown aside and forgotten.

Is this an idle boast? Or had he made other discoveries of equal importance, which he did not think it

[1] It was written in the King's Bench in 1775, the author having been committed for an alleged libel on the Government.—Ed.

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worth his while to communicate to the world, but chose to die the churl of knowledge? The whole of his reasoning turns upon showing that the Conjunction *That* is the pronoun *That*, which is itself the participle of a verb, and in like manner that all the other mystical and hitherto unintelligible parts of speech are derived from the only two intelligible ones, the Verb and Noun. "I affirm *that* gold is yellow," that is, "I affirm *that* fact, or that proposition, viz. gold is yellow." The secret of the Conjunction on which so many fine heads had split, on which so many learned definitions were thrown away, as if it was its peculiar province and inborn virtue to announce oracles and formal propositions, and nothing else, like a Doctor of Laws, is here at once accounted for, inasmuch as it is clearly nothing but another part of speech, the pronoun *that*, with a third part of speech, the noun *thing*, understood.

This is getting at a solution of words into their component parts, not glossing over one difficulty by bringing another to parallel it, nor like saying with Mr. Harris, when it is asked, "what a Conjunction is?" that there are conjunctions copulative, conjunctions disjunctive, and as many other frivolous varieties of the species as any one chooses to hunt out "with laborious foolery." Our auther hit upon his parent-discovery in the course of a law-suit, while he was examining, with jealous watchfulness the meaning of words to prevent being entrapped by them; or rather this circumstance might itself be traced to the habit of satisfying his own mind as to the precise sense in which he himself made use of words. Mr. Tooke, though he had no objection to puzzle others, was mightily averse to being puzzled or *mystified* himself. All was, to his determined mind, either complete light or complete darkness. There was no hazy, doubtful *chiaro-scuro* in his understanding. He

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wanted something "palpable to feeling as to sight." "What," he would say to himself, "do I mean when I use the conjunction *that?* Is it an anomaly, a class by itself, a word sealed against all inquisitive attempts? Is it enough to call it a *copula*, a bridge, a link, a word connecting sentences? That is undoubtedly its use; but what is its origin?"

Mr. Tooke thought he had answered this question satisfactorily, and loosened the Gordian knot of grammarians, "familiar as his garter," when he said, "It is the common pronoun, adjective, or participle, *that*, with the noun, *thing or proposition*, implied, and the particular example following it." So he thought, and so every reader has thought since, with the exception of teachers and writers upon Grammar. Mr. Windham, indeed, who was a sophist, but not a logician, charged him with having found "a mare's nest;" but it is not to be doubted that Mr. Tooke's etymologies will stand the test, and last longer than Mr. Windham's ingenious derivation of the practice of bull-baiting from the principles of humanity!

Having thus laid the corner-stone, he proceeded to apply the same method of reasoning to other undecyphered and impracticable terms. Thus the word, *And*, he explained clearly enough to be the verb *add*, or a corruption of the old Saxon, *anandad*. "Two *and* two make four," that is, "two *add* two make four." Mr. Tooke, in fact, treated words, as the chemists do substances; he separated those which are compounded of others from those which are not decompoundable. He did not explain the obscure by the more obscure, but the difficult by the plain, the complex by the simple. This alone is proceeding upon the true principles of science: the rest is pedantry and *petit-maitreship*. Our philosophical writer distinguished all words into *names of*

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things, and directions added for joining them together, or originally into *nouns* and *verbs*. It is a pity that he has left this matter short, by omitting to define the Verb. After enumerating sixteen different definitions (all of which he dismisses with scorn and contumely) at the end of two quarto volumes, he refers the reader for the true solution to a third volume, which he did not live to finish. This extraordinary man was in the habit of tantalizing his guests on a Sunday afternoon with sundry abstruse speculations, and putting them off to the following week for a satisfaction of their doubts; but why should he treat posterity in the same scurvy manner, or leave the world without quitting scores with it?

I question whether Mr. Tooke was himself in possession of his pretended *nostrum*, and whether, after trying hard at a definition of the verb as a distinct part of speech, as a terrier dog mumbles a hedge-hog, he did not find it too much for him, and leave it to its fate. It is also a pity that Mr. Tooke spun out his great work with prolix and dogmatical dissertations on irrevelant matters, and after denying the old metaphysical theories of language, should attempt to found a metaphysical theory of his own on the nature and mechanism of language. The nature of words, he contended (it was the basis of his whole system), had no connection with the nature of things or the objects of thought; yet he afterwards strove to limit the nature of things and of the human mind by the technical structure of language. Thus he endeavours to show that there are no abstract ideas, by enumerating two thousand instances of words, expressing abstract ideas, that are the past participles of certain verbs. It is difficult to know what he means by this. On the other hand, he maintains that "a complex idea is as great an absurdity as a complex star," and that

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words only are complex. He also makes out a triumphant list of metaphysical and moral non-entities, proved to be so on the pure principle that the names of these non-entities are participles, not nouns or names of things. That is strange in so close a reasoner, and in one who maintained that all language was a masquerade of words, and that the class to which they grammatically belonged had nothing to do with the class of ideas they represented.

It is now above twenty years since the two quarto volumes of the *Diversions of Purley* were published, and fifty since the same theory was promulgated in the celebrated *Letter to Dunning*.[1] Yet it is a curious example of the Spirit of the Age that Mr. Lindley Murray's Grammar [2] (a work out of which Mr. C*** [3] helps himself to English, and Mr. M*** to style) has proceeded to the thirtieth edition in complete defiance of all the facts and arguments there laid down. He defines a noun to be the name of a thing. Is quackery a thing, *i.e.* a substance? He defines a verb to be a word signifying *to be, to do, or to suffer.* Are being, action, suffering, verbs? He defines an adjective to be the name of a quality. Are not *wooden, golden, substantial* adjectives? He maintains that there are six cases in English nouns,

[1] The *Diversions of Purley* originally appeared in 1786 incompletely, only volume the first being printed. The earliest edition of the whole work was in 1798—1805, 2 vols. 4to. In 1829, a new edition was brought out by Richard Taylor, who annexed the *Letter to Dunning*.—Ed.

[2] This work is not without merit in the details and examples of English construction. But its fault even in that part is that he confounds the genius of the English language, making it periphrastic and literal, instead of elliptical and idiomatic. According to Mr. Murray, hardly any of our best writers ever wrote a word of English.

[3] Probably Croker.—Ed.

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that is, six various terminations without any change of termination at all,[1] and that English verbs have all the moods, tenses and persons that the Latin ones have. This is an extraordinary stretch of blindness and obstinacy.[2] He very formally translates the Latin Grammar into English (as so many had done before him), and fancies he has written an English Grammar; and divines applaud, and schoolmasters usher him into the polite world, and English scholars carry on the jest, while Horne Tooke's genuine anatomy of our native tongue is laid on the shelf. Can it be that our politicians smell a rat in the Member for Old Sarum, that our clergy do not relish Parson Horne, that the world at large are alarmed at acuteness and originality greater than their own? What has all this to do with the formation of the English language, or with the first conditions and necessary foundation of speech itself? Is there nothing beyond the reach of prejudice and party-spirit? It seems in this, as in so many other instances, as if there was a patent for absurdity in the natural bias of the human mind, and that folly should be *stereotyped!*

[1] At least, with only one change in the genitive case.

[2] Murray's work was first published at York in 1795, 12mo. The Exercises with a Key were added in 1797.—Ed.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT.

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SIR WALTER SCOTT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT is undoubtedly the most popular writer of the age, the "lord of the ascendant" for the time being. He is just half what the human intellect is capable of being: if you take the universe, and divide it into two parts, he knows all that it *has been;* all that it *is to be* is nothing to him. His is a mind brooding over antiquity—scorning "the present ignorant time." He is "laudator temporis acti"—a "*prophesier* of things past." The old world is to him a crowded map; the new one a dull, hateful blank. He dotes on all well-authenticated superstitions; he shudders at the shadow of innovation. His retentiveness of memory, his accumulated weight of interested prejudice or romantic association have overlaid his other faculties. The cells of his memory are vast, various, full even to bursting with life and motion; his speculative understanding is empty, flaccid, poor, and dead. His mind receives and treasures up every thing brought to it by tradition or custom—it does not project itself beyond this into the world unknown, but mechanically shrinks back as from the edge of a precipice. The land of pure reason is to his apprehension like Van Diemen's Land—barren, miserable, distant, a place of exile, the dreary abode of savages, convicts, and adventurers. Sir Walter would make a bad hand of a description of the Millennium, unless he could lay the scene in Scotland

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five hundred years ago, and then he would want facts and worm-eaten parchments to support his drooping style. Our historical novelist firmly thinks that nothing *is* but what *has been*, that the moral world stands still, as the material one was supposed to do of old, and that we can never get beyond the point where we actually are without utter destruction, though every thing changes and will change from what it was three hundred years ago to what it is now,—from what it is now to all that the bigoted admirer of the good old times most dreads and hates!

It is long since we read, and long since we thought of our author's poetry. It would probably have gone out of date with the immediate occasion, even if he himself had not contrived to banish it from our recollection. It is not to be denied that it had great merit, both of an obvious and intrinsic kind. It abounded in vivid descriptions, in spirited action, in smooth and flowing versification. But it wanted *character*. It was "poetry of no mark or likelihood." It slid out of the mind as soon as read, like a river; and would have been forgotten, but that the public curiosity was fed with ever new supplies from the same teeming liquid source. It is not every man that can write six quarto volumes in verse, that are caught up with avidity, even by fastidious judges. But what a difference between *their* popularity and that of the Scotch Novels! It is true, the public read and admired the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, and so on, and each individual was contented to read and admire because the public did so: but with regard to the prose-works of the same (supposed) author, it is quite *another-guess* sort of thing. Here every one stands forward to applaud on his own ground, would be thought to go before the public opinion: is eager to extol his favourite characters louder, to understand them better,

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than everybody else, and has his own scale of comparative excellence for each work, supported by nothing but his own enthusiastic and fearless convictions.

It must be amusing to the *Author of Waverley* to hear his readers and admirers (and are not these the same thing?[1]) quarrelling which of his novels is the best, opposing character to character, quoting passage against passage, striving to surpass each other in the extravagance of their encomiums, and yet unable to settle the precedence, or to do the author's writings justice—so various, so equal, so transcendant are their merits! His volumes of poetry were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends. There was something meretricious in Sir Walter's ballad-rhymes; and like those who keep opera *figurantes*, we were willing to have our admiration shared, and our taste confirmed by the town. But the Novels are like the betrothed of our hearts, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, and we are jealous that any one should be as much delighted or as thoroughly acquainted with their beauties as ourselves. For which of his poetical heroines would the reader break a lance so soon as for Jeanie Deans? What *Lady of the Lake* can compare with the beautiful Rebecca? We believe the late Mr. John Scott went to his death-bed (though a painful and premature one)[2] with

[1] No! For we met with a young lady who kept a circulating library and a milliner's shop in a watering-place in the country, who, when we inquired for the *Scotch Novels*, spoke indifferently about them, said they were "so dry she could hardly get through them," and recommended us to read *Agnes*. We never thought of it before; but we would venture to lay a wager that there are many other young ladies in the same situation, and who think "Old Mortality" "dry."

[2] He fell, as is well known, in a duel. There is an account of the matter in the *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, i. 301.—Ed.

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some degree of satisfaction, inasmuch as he had penned the most elaborate panegyric on the *Scotch Novels* that had as yet appeared!

The *Epics* are not poems, so much as metrical romances. There is a glittering veil of verse thrown over the features of nature and of old romance. The deep incisions into character are "skinned and filmed over;" the details are lost or shaped into flimsy and insipid decorum; and the truth of feeling and of circumstance is translated into a tinkling sound, a tinsel *commonplace*. It must be owned, there is a power in true poetry that lifts the mind from the ground of reality to a higher sphere, that penetrates the inert, scattered, incoherent materials presented to it, and by a force and inspiration of its own, melts and moulds them into sublimity and beauty. But Sir Walter (we contend, under correction) has not this creative impulse, this plastic power, this capacity of reacting on his first impressions. He is a learned, a literal, a *matter-of-fact* expounder of truth or fable:[1] he does not soar above and look down upon his subject, imparting his own lofty views and feelings to his descriptions of nature—he relies upon it, is raised by it, is one with it, or he is nothing. A poet is essentially a *maker;* that is, he must atone for what he loses in individuality and local resemblance by the energies and resources of his own mind.

The writer of whom we speak is deficient in these last. He has either not the faculty or not the will to impregnate his subject by an effort of pure invention. The execution also is much upon a par with the more ephemeral effusions of the press. It is light, agreeable, effeminate, diffuse. Sir Walter's Muse is a *Modern Antique*. The smooth, glossy texture of his verse contrasts happily with the quaint, uncouth, rugged mate-

[1] Just as Cobbett is a matter-of-fact reasoner.

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rials of which it is composed, and takes away any appearance of heaviness or harshness from the body of local traditions and obsolete costume. We see grim knights and iron armour; but then they are woven in silk with a careless, delicate hand, and have the softness of flowers. The poet's figures might be compared to old tapestries copied on the finest velvet:—they are not like Raphael's *Cartoons;* but they are very like Mr. Westall's drawings which accompany, and are intended to illustrate, them.

This facility and grace of execution is the more remarkable, as a story goes that not long before the appearance of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel,* Sir Walter (then Mr.) Scott, having, in the company of a friend, to cross the Frith of Forth in a ferry-boat, they proposed to beguile the time by writing a number of verses on a given subject, and that, at the end of an hour's hard study, they found they had produced only six lines between them. "It is plain," said the unconscious author to his fellow-labourer, "that you and I need never think of getting our living by writing poetry!" In a year or so after this, he set to work, and poured out quarto upon quarto, as if they had been drops of water. As to the rest, and compared with true and great poets, our Scottish Minstrel is but "a metre ballad-monger." We would rather have written one song of Burns, or a single passage in Lord Byron's *Heaven and Earth,* or one of Wordsworth's "fancies and good-nights," than all his epics. What is he to Spenser, over whose immortal, ever-amiable verse beauty hovers and trembles, and who has shed the purple light of Fancy from his ambrosial wings over all nature? What is there of the might of Milton, whose head is canopied in the blue serene, and who takes us to sit with him there? What is there in his ambling rhymes of the deep pathos of Chaucer?

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Or of the o'er-informing power of Shakespear, whose eye, watching alike the minutest traces of character and the strongest movements of passion, "glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," and with the lambent flame of genius, playing round each object, lights up the universe in a robe of its own radiance? Sir Walter has no voluntary power of combination: all his associations (as we said before) are those of habit or of tradition. He is a mere narrative and descriptive poet, garrulous of the old time. The definition of his poetry is a pleasing superficiality.

Not so of his NOVELS AND ROMANCES. There we turn over a new leaf—another and the same—the same in matter, but in form, in power how different! The author of Waverley has got rid of the tagging of rhymes, the eking out of syllables, the supplying of epithets, the colours of style, the grouping of his characters, and the regular march of events, and comes to the point at once, and strikes at the heart of his subject, without dismay and without disguise. His poetry was a lady's waiting-maid, dressed out in cast-off finery: his prose is a beautiful, rustic nymph, that, like Dorothea in *Don Quixote*, when she is surprised with dishevelled tresses bathing her naked feet in the brook, looks round her, abashed at the admiration her charms have excited! The grand secret of the author's success in these latter productions is that he has completely got rid of the trammels of authorship, and torn off at one rent (as Jack got rid of so many yards of lace in the *Tale of a Tub*) all the ornaments of fine writing and worn-out sentimentality.

All is fresh, as from the hand of nature: by going a century or two back and laying the scene in a remote and uncultivated district, all becomes new and startling in the present advanced period. Highland manners,

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characters, scenery, superstitions: Northern dialect and costume: the wars, the religion, and politics of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, give a charming and wholesome relief to the fastidious refinement and "over-laboured lassitude" of modern readers, like the effect of plunging a nervous valetudinarian into a cold bath.

The *Scotch Novels*, for this reason, are not so much admired in Scotland as in England. The contrast, the transition is less striking. From the top of the Calton Hill, the inhabitants of "Auld Reekie"[1] can descry, or fancy they descry the peaks of Ben Lomond and the waving outline of Rob Roy's country: we who live at the southern extremity of the island can only catch a glimpse of the billowy scene in the descriptions of the Author of Waverley. The mountain air is most bracing to our languid nerves, and it is brought us in ship-loads from the neighbourhood of Abbot's-Ford. There is another circumstance to be taken into the account. In Edinburgh there is a little opposition and something of the spirit of cabal between the partisans of works proceeding from Mr. Constable's and Mr. Blackwood's shops. Mr. Constable gives the highest prices; but, being the Whig bookseller, it is grudged that he should do so. An attempt is therefore made to transfer a certain share of popularity to the second-rate Scotch novels, "the embryo fry, the little aëry of *ricketty* children," issuing through Mr. Blackwood's shop-door. This operates a diversion, which does not affect us here.

The Author of Waverley wears the palm of legendary

[1] The old town of Edinburgh, so called for a reason, which it is scarcely necessary to furnish to any one who has read accounts of its former filthy condition in the *Life of James Nasmyth* and other works.—Ed.

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lore alone. Sir Walter may, indeed, surfeit us: his imitators make us sick! It may be asked, it has been asked, "Have we no materials for romance in England? Must we look to Scotland for a supply of whatever is original and striking in this kind?" And we answer "Yes!" Every foot of soil is with us worked up: nearly every movement of the social machine is calculable. We have no room left for violent catastrophes, for grotesque quaintnesses, for wizard spells. The last skirts of ignorance and barbarism are seen hovering (in Sir Walter's pages) over the Border. We have, it is true, gipsies in this country as well as at the Cairn of Derncleugh: but they live under clipped hedges and repose in camp-beds, and do not perch on crags, like eagles, or take shelter, like sea-mews, in basaltic subterranean caverns. We have heaths with rude heaps of stones upon them: but no existing superstition converts them into the Geese of Micklestane-Moor, or sees a Black Dwarf groping among them. We have sects in religion: but the only thing sublime or ridiculous in that way is Mr. Irving, the Caledonian preacher, who "comes like a satyr staring from the woods, and yet speaks like an orator!"

We had a Parson Adams not quite a hundred years ago, a Sir Roger de Coverley rather more than a hundred! Even Sir Walter is ordinarily obliged to pitch his angle (strong as the hook is) a hundred miles to the North of the "Modern Athens" or a century back. His last work[1] indeed is mystical, is romantic in nothing but the title-page. Instead of "a holy-water sprinkle dipped in dew," he has given us a fashionable watering-place; and we see what he has made of it. He must not come down from his fastnesses in traditional barbarism and native rusticity: the level, the littleness, the

[1] St. Ronan's Well.

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frippery of modern civilization will undo him, as it has undone us.

Sir Walter has found out (O rare discovery) that facts are better than fiction, that there is no romance like the romance of real life, and that, if we can but arrive at what men feel, do, and say in striking and singular situations, the result will be "more lively, audible, and full of vent," than the fine-spun cobwebs of the brain. With reverence be it spoken, he is like the man who, having to imitate the squeaking of a pig upon the stage, brought the animal under his coat with him. Our author has conjured up the actual people he has to deal with, or as much as he could get of them, in "their habits as they lived." He has ransacked old chronicles, and poured the contents upon his page; he has squeezed out musty records; he has consulted wayfaring pilgrims, bed-rid sybils. He has invoked the spirits of the air; he has conversed with the living and the dead, and let them tell their story their own way; and by borrowing of others has enriched his own genius with everlasting variety, truth and freedom. He has taken his materials from the original, authentic sources in large concrete masses, and not tampered with or too much frittered them away.

He is only the amanuensis of truth and history. It is impossible to say how fine his writings in consequence are, unless we could describe how fine nature is. All that portion of the history of his country that he has touched upon (wide as the scope is)—the manners, the personages, the events, the scenery, lives over again in his volumes. Nothing is wanting—the illusion is complete. There is a hurtling in the air, a trampling of feet upon the ground, as these perfect representations of human character or fanciful belief come thronging back upon our imaginations. We will merely recall a few of

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the subjects of his pencil to the reader's recollection; for nothing we could add, by way of note or commendation, could make the impression more vivid.

There is (first and foremost, because the earliest of our acquaintance) the Baron of Bradwardine, stately, kind-hearted, whimsical, pedantic: and Flora MacIvor (whom even *we* forgive for her Jacobitism), the fierce Vich Ian Vohr, and Evan Dhu, constant in death, and Davie Gellatly roasting his eggs or turning his rhymes with restless volubility, and the two stag-hounds that met Waverley, as fine as ever Titian painted, or Paul Veronese. Then there is old Balfour of Burley, brandishing his sword and his Bible with fire-eyed fury, trying a fall with the insolent, gigantic Bothwell at the 'Change-house, and vanquishing him at the noble battle of Loudon-hill; there is Bothwell himself, drawn to the life: proud, cruel, selfish, profligate, but with the love-letters of the gentle Agnes (written thirty years before) and his verses to her memory found in his pocket after his death. In the same volume of *Old Mortality* is that lone figure, like a figure in Scripture, of the woman sitting on the stone at the turning to the mountain, to warn Burley that there is a lion in his path; and the fawning Claverhouse, beautiful as a panther, smooth-looking, blood-spotted; and the fanatics, Macbriar and Mucklewrath, crazed with zeal and sufferings; and the inflexible Morton and the faithful Edith, who refused to "give her hand to another while her heart was with her lover in the deep and dead sea."

And in *The Heart of Mid Lothian* we have Effie Deans (that sweet, faded flower) and Jeanie, her more than sister, and old David Deans, the patriarch of St. Leonard's Crags, and Butler, and Dumbiedikes, eloquent in his silence, and Mr. Bartoline Saddle-tree and his prudent helpmate, and Porteous swinging in the wind, and

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Madge Wildfire, full of finery and madness, and her ghastly mother. Again, there is Meg Merrilies, standing on her rock, stretched on her bier with "her head to the east," and Dirk Hatterick (equal to Shakespear's Master Barnardine), and Glossin, the soul of an attorney, and Dandy Dinmont, with his terrier-pack and his pony Dumple, and the fiery Colonel Mannering, and the modish old counsellor Pleydell, and Dominie Sampson,[1] and Rob Roy (like the eagle in his eyry), and Baillie Nicol Jarvie, and the inimitable Major Galbraith, and Rashleigh Osbaldistone, and Die Vernon, the best of secret-keepers. And in the *Antiquary*, the ingenious and abstruse Mr. Jonathan Oldbuck, and the old beadsman Edie Ochiltree, and that preternatural figure of old Edith Elspeith, a living shadow, in whom the lamp of life had been long extinguished, had it not been fed by remorse and "thick-coming" recollections; and that striking picture of the effects of feudal tyranny and fiendish pride, the unhappy Earl of Glenallan; and the Black Dwarf and his friend Habbie of the Heughfoot (the cheerful hunter), and his cousin Grace Armstrong, fresh and laughing like the morning; and the *Children of the Mist*, and the baying of the blood-hound that tracks their steps at a distance (the hollow echoes are in our ears now), and Amy and her hapless love, and the villain Varney, and the deep voice of George of Douglas—and the immovable Balafre, and Master Oliver the Barber in *Quentin Durward*—and the quaint humour of the *Fortunes of Nigel*, and the comic spirit of *Peveril of the Peak*—and the fine old English romance of *Ivanhoe*.

What a list of names! What a host of associations! What a thing is human life! What a power is that of

[1] Perhaps the finest scene in all these novels, is that where the Dominie meets his pupil, Miss Lucy, the morning after her brother's arrival.

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genius! What a world of thought and feeling is thus rescued from oblivion! How many hours of heartfelt satisfaction has our author given to the gay and thoughtless! How many sad hearts has he soothed in pain and solitude! It is no wonder that the public repay with lengthened applause and gratitude the pleasure they receive. He writes as fast as they can read, and he does not write himself down. He is always in the public eye, and we do not tire of him. His worst is better than any other person's best. His *back-grounds* (and his later works are little else but back-grounds capitally made out) are more attractive than the principal figures and most complicated actions of other writers. His works (taken together) are almost like a new edition of human nature. This is indeed to be an author!

The political bearing of the *Scotch Novels* has been a considerable recommendation to them. They are a relief to the mind, rarefied as it has been with modern philosophy, and heated with ultra-radicalism. At a time also, when we bid fair to revive the principles of the Stuarts, it is interesting to bring us acquainted with their persons and misfortunes. The candour of Sir Walter's historic pen levels our bristling prejudices on this score, and sees fair play between Roundheads and Cavaliers, between Protestant and Papist. He is a writer reconciling all the diversities of human nature to the reader. He does not enter into the distinctions of hostile sects or parties, but treats of the strength or the infirmity of the human mind, of the virtues or vices of the human breast, as they are to be found blended in the whole race of mankind. Nothing can show more handsomely or be more gallantly executed. There was a talk at one time that our author was about to take Guy Faux for the subject of one of his novels, in order to put a more liberal and humane construction

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on the Gunpowder Plot than our "No Popery" prejudices have hitherto permitted.

Sir Walter is a professed *clarifier* of the age from the vulgar and still lurking old-English antipathy to Popery and Slavery. Through some odd process of *servile* logic, it should seem, that in restoring the claims of the Stuarts by the courtesy of romance, the House of Brunswick are more firmly seated in point of fact, and the Bourbons, by collateral reasoning, become legitimate! In any other point of view, we cannot possibly conceive how Sir Walter imagines "he has done something to revive the declining spirit of loyalty" by these novels. His loyalty is founded on *would-be* treason: he props the actual throne by the shadow of rebellion. Does he really think of making us enamoured of the "good old times" by the faithful and harrowing portraits he has drawn of them? Would he carry us back to the early stages of barbarism, of clanship, of the feudal system, as "a consummation devoutly to be wished?" Is he infatuated enough, or does he so doat and drivel over his own slothful and self-willed prejudices, as to believe that he will make a single convert to the beauty of Legitimacy, that is, of lawless power and savage bigotry, when he himself is obliged to apologize for the horrors he describes, and even render his descriptions credible to the modern reader by referring to the authentic history of these delectable times?[1]

[1] "And here we cannot but think it necessary to offer some better proof than the incidents of an idle tale, to vindicate the melancholy representation of manners which has been just laid before the reader. It is grievous to think that those valiant Barons, to whose stand against the crown the liberties of England were indebted for their existence, should themselves have been such dreadful oppressors, and capable of excesses, contrary not only to the laws of England, but to those of nature and humanity. But alas! we have only to extract from the industrious Henry one of those numerous passages which

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He is indeed so besotted as to the moral of his own story, that he has even the blindness to go out of his way to have a fling at *flints* and *dungs* (the contemptible ingredients, as he would have us believe, of a modern rabble) at the very time when he is describing a mob of the twelfth century—a mob (one should think) after the writer's own heart, without one particle of modern philosophy or revolutionary politics in their composition, who were to a man, to a hair, just what priests, and kings, and nobles *let* them be, and who were collected to witness (a spectacle proper to the times) the burning of the lovely Rebecca at a stake for a sorceress, because she was a Jewess, beautiful and innocent, and the consequent victim of insane bigotry and unbridled profligacy. And it is at this moment (when the heart is kindled and bursting with indignation at the revolting abuses of self-constituted power) that Sir Walter *stops the press* to have a sneer at the people, and to put a spoke (as he thinks) in the wheel of upstart innovation!

he has collected from contemporary historians, to prove that fiction itself can hardly reach the dark reality of the horrors of the period.

"The description given by the author of the Saxon Chronicle of the cruelties exercised in the reign of King Stephen by the great barons and lords of castles, who were all Normans, affords a strong proof of the excesses of which they were capable when their passions were inflamed. 'They grievously oppressed the poor people by building castles; and when they were built, they filled them with wicked men or rather devils, who seized both men and women who they imagined had any money, threw them into prison, and put them to more cruel tortures than the martyrs ever endured. They suffocated some in mud, and suspended others by the feet, or the head, or the thumbs, kindling fires below them. They squeezed the heads of some with knotted cords till they pierced their brains, while they threw others into dungeons swarming with serpents, snakes, and toads.' But it would be cruel to put the reader to the pain of perusing the remainder of the description."—*Henry's Hist.*, edit. 1805, vol. vii. p. 346.

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This is what he "calls backing his friends"; it is thus he administers charms and philtres to our love of Legitimacy, makes us conceive a horror of all reform, civil, political or religious, and would fain put down the Spirit of the Age.

The author of *Waverley* might just as well get up and make a speech at a dinner at Edinburgh, abusing Mr. Mac-Adam for his improvements in the roads, on the ground that they were nearly *impassable* in many places "sixty years since;" or object to Mr. Peel's *Police-Bill*, by insisting that Hounslow-Heath was formerly a scene of greater interest and terror to highwaymen and travellers, and cut a greater figure in the Newgate Calendar than it does at present. O Wickliff, Luther, Hampden, Sidney, Somers, mistaken Whigs and thoughtless Reformers in religion and politics, and all ye, whether poets or philosophers, heroes or sages, inventors of arts or sciences, patriots, benefactors of the human race, enlighteners and civilisers of the world, who have (so far) reduced opinion to reason and power to law, who are the cause that we no longer burn witches and heretics at slow fires, that the thumb-screws are no longer applied by ghastly, smiling judges, to extort confession of imputed crimes from sufferers for conscience sake: that men are no longer strung up like acorns on trees without judge or jury, or hunted like wild beasts through thickets and glens: who have abated the cruelty of priests, the pride of nobles, the divinity of kings in former times: to whom we owe it that we no longer wear round our necks the collar of Gurth the swineherd and of Wamba the jester, that the castles of great lords are no longer the dens of banditti, whence they issue with fire and sword to lay waste the land: that we no longer expire in loathsome dungeons without knowing the cause, or have our right hands struck off for

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raising them in self-defence against wanton insult, that we can sleep without fear of being burnt in our beds, or travel without making our wills: that no Amy Robsarts are thrown down trap-doors by Richard Varneys with impunity, that no Red Reiver of Westburn-Flat sets fire to peaceful cottages, that no Claverhouse signs cold-blooded death-warrants in sport, that we have no Tristan L'Hermite or Petit-Andrè, crawling near us like spiders, and making our flesh creep, and our hearts sicken within us at every moment of our lives —ye, who have produced this change in the face of nature and society, return to earth once more, and beg pardon of Sir Walter and his patrons, who sigh at not being able to undo all that you have done!

Leaving this question, there are two other remarks which we wished to make on the Novels. The one was, to express our admiration of the good-nature of the mottos, in which the author has taken occasion to remember and quote almost every living author (whether illustrious or obscure) but himself—an indirect argument in favour of the general opinion as to the source from which they spring; and the other was, to hint our astonishment at the innumerable and incessant instances of bad and slovenly English in them—more, we believe, than in any other works now printed. We should think the writer could not possibly read the manuscript after he has once written it, or overlook the press.

If there were a writer, who "born for the universe"—

> "————Narrow'd his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind—"

who, from the height of his genius looking abroad into nature, and scanning the recesses of the human heart, "winked and shut his apprehension up" to every thought or purpose that tended to the future good of mankind—

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who, raised by affluence, the reward of successful industry, and by the voice of fame above the want of any but the most honourable patronage, stooped to the unworthy arts of adulation, and abetted the views of the great with the pettifogging feelings of the meanest dependant on office—who, having secured the admiration of the public (with the probable reversion of immortality), showed no respect for himself, for that genius that had raised him to distinction, for that nature which he trampled under foot—who, amiable, frank, friendly, manly in private life, was seized with the dotage of age and the fury of a woman the instant politics were concerned—who reserved all his candour and comprehensiveness of view for history, and vented his littleness, pique, resentment, bigotry and intolerance on his contemporaries—who took the wrong side, and defended it by unfair means—who, the moment his own interest or the prejudices of others interfered, seemed to forget all that was due to the pride of intellect, to the sense of manhood—who, praised, admired by men of all parties alike, repaid the public liberality by striking a secret and envenomed blow at the reputation of every one who was not the ready tool of power—who strewed the slime of rankling malice and mercenary scorn over the bud and promise of genius, because it was not fostered in the hot-bed of corruption, or warped by the trammels of servility—who supported the worst abuses of authority in the worst spirit—who joined a gang of desperadoes to spread calumny, contempt, infamy, wherever they were merited by honesty or talent on a different side—who officiously undertook to decide public questions by private insinuations, to prop the throne by nicknames and the altar by lies—who being (by common consent) the finest, the most humane and accomplished writer of his age, associated himself with and encouraged the

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lowest panders of a venal press: deluging, nauseating the public mind with the offal and garbage of Billingsgate abuse and vulgar *slang:* showing no remorse, no relenting or compassion towards the victims of this nefarious and organized system of party-proscription, carried on under the mask of literary criticism and fair discussion, insulting the misfortunes of some, and trampling on the early grave of others—

> "Who would not grieve if such a man there be?
> Who would not weep if Atticus were he?"

But we believe there is no other age or country of the world (but ours), in which such genius could have been so degraded!

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LORD BYRON.

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LORD BYRON.[1]

LORD BYRON and Sir Walter Scott are among writers now living[2] the two, who would carry away a majority of suffrages as the greatest geniuses of the age. The former would, perhaps, obtain the preference with the fine gentlemen and ladies (squeamishness apart), the latter with the critics and the vulgar. We shall treat of them in the same connection, partly on account of their distinguished pre-eminence, and partly because they afford a complete contrast to each other. In their poetry, in their prose, in their politics, and in their tempers, no two men can be more unlike.

If Sir Walter Scott may be thought by some to have been

> "Born universal heir to all humanity,"

it is plain Lord Byron can set up no such pretension. He is, in a striking degree, the creature of his own will.

[1] Hazlitt clearly undervalues Byron, as he did Shelley, although the two writers in point of thought and genius are scarcely to be compared. It would be ridiculous to deny the vast intellectual power of Byron in his *English Bards* and *Don Juan*. Whom have we to produce works of such a calibre at the present time? But Lamb and Hazlitt united in disliking Byron as one who had sneered at the Lake and Cockney schools, and Shelley shared this feeling as the intimate associate of the noble poet rather than on account of anything which he had personally done.—Ed.

[2] This Essay was written just before Lord Byron's death. [Sir Walter died in 1832.]

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He holds no communion with his kind, but stands alone without mate or fellow—

> "As if a man were author of himself,
> And owned no other kin."

He is like a solitary peak, all access to which is cut off not more by elevation than distance. He is seated on a lofty eminence, "cloud-capt," or reflecting the last rays of setting suns, and in his poetical moods reminds us of the fabled Titans, retired to a ridgy steep, playing on their Pan's-pipes, and taking up ordinary men and things in their hands with haughty indifference. He raises his subject to himself, or tramples on it; he neither stoops to, nor loses himself in it. He exists not by sympathy, but by antipathy. He scorns all things, even himself. Nature must come to him to sit for her picture: he does not go to her. She must consult his time, his convenience and his humour, and wear a *sombre* or a fantastic garb, or his Lordship turns his back upon her. There is no ease, no unaffected simplicity of manner, no "golden mean." All is strained, or petulant in the extreme. His thoughts are sphered and crystalline; his style "prouder than when blue Iris bends;" his spirit fiery, impatient, wayward, indefatigable. Instead of taking his impressions from without, in entire and almost unimpaired masses, he moulds them according to his own temperament, and heats the materials of his imagination in the furnace of his passions. Lord Byron's verse glows like a flame, consuming every thing in its way; Sir Walter Scott's glides like a river: clear, gentle, harmless. The poetry of the first scorches, that of the last scarcely warms. The light of the one proceeds from an internal source, ensanguined, sullen, fixed; the other reflects the hues of Heaven or the face of nature, glancing, vivid and various.

The productions of the Northern Bard have the rust

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and the freshness of antiquity about them; those of the Noble Poet cease to startle from their extreme ambition of novelty, both in style and matter. Sir Walter's rhymes are "silly sooth"—

> "And dally with the innocence of thought,
> Like the old age"—

his Lordship's Muse spurns *the olden time*, and affects all the supercilious airs of a modern fine lady and an upstart. The object of the one writer is to restore us to truth and nature: the other chiefly thinks how he shall display his own power, or vent his spleen, or astonish the reader either by starting new subjects and trains of speculation, or by expressing old ones in a more striking and emphatic manner than they have been expressed before. He cares little what it is he says, so that he can say it differently from others. This may account for the charges of plagiarism which have been repeatedly brought against the Noble Poet. If he can borrow an image or sentiment from another, and heighten it by an epithet or an allusion of greater force and beauty than is to be found in the original passage, he thinks he shows his superiority of execution in this in a more marked manner than if the first suggestion had been his own. It is not the value of the observation itself he is solicitous about; but he wishes to shine by contrast—even nature only serves as a foil to set off his style. He therefore takes the thoughts of others (whether contemporaries or not) out of their mouths, and is content to make them his own, to set his stamp upon them, by imparting to them a more meretricious gloss, a higher relief, a greater loftiness of tone, and a characteristic inveteracy of purpose.

Even in those collateral ornaments of modern style, slovenliness, abruptness and eccentricity (as well as in terseness and significance), Lord Byron, when he pleases, defies competition and surpasses all his contemporaries.

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Whatever he does, he must do in a more decided and daring manner than any one else; he lounges with extravagance, and yawns so as to alarm the reader! Self-will, passion, the love of singularity, a disdain of himself and of others (with a conscious sense that this is among the ways and means of procuring admiration) are the proper categories of his mind: he is a lordly writer, is above his own reputation, and condescends to the Muses with a scornful grace!

Lord Byron, who in his politics is a *liberal*, in his genius is haughty and aristocratic: Walter Scott, who is an aristocrat in principle, is popular in his writings, and is (as it were) equally *servile* to nature and to opinion. The genius of Sir Walter is essentially imitative, or "denotes a foregone conclusion:" that of Lord Byron is self-dependent or at least requires no aid, is governed by no law but the impulses of its own will. We confess, however much we may admire independence of feeling and erectness of spirit in general or practical questions, yet in works of genius we prefer him who bows to the authority of nature, who appeals to actual objects, to mouldering superstitions, to history, observation and tradition, before him who only consults the pragmatical and restless workings of his own breast, and gives them out as oracles to the world. We like a writer (whether poet or prose writer) who takes in (or is willing to take in) the range of half the universe in feeling, character, description, much better than we do one who obstinately and invariably shuts himself up in the Bastille of his own ruling passions. In short, we had rather be Sir Walter Scott (meaning thereby the Author of Waverley) than Lord Byron a hundred times over, and for the reason just given, namely, that he casts his descriptions in the mould of nature, ever-varying, never tiresome, always interesting and always instructive, in-

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stead of casting them constantly in the mould of his own individual impressions.

He gives us man as he is, or as he was, in almost every variety of situation, action and feeling. Lord Byron makes man after his own image, woman after his own heart; the one is a capricious tyrant, the other a yielding slave; he gives us the misanthrope and the voluptuary by turns; and with these two characters, burning or melting in their own fires, he makes out everlasting centos of himself. He hangs the cloud, the film of his existence over all outward things, sits in the centre of his thoughts, and enjoys dark night, bright day, the glitter and the gloom, "in cell monastic." We see the mournful pall, the crucifix, the death's-heads, the faded chaplet of flowers, the gleaming tapers, the agonized brow of genius, the wasted form of beauty; but we are still imprisoned in a dungeon; a curtain intercepts our view; we do not breathe freely the air of nature or of our own thoughts. The other admired author draws aside the curtain, and the veil of egotism is rent; and he shows us the crowd of living men and women, the endless groups, the landscape back-ground, the cloud and the rainbow, and enriches our imaginations and relieves one passion by another, and expands and lightens reflection, and takes away that tightness at the breast which arises from thinking or wishing to think that there is nothing in the world out of a man's self!

In this point of view, the Author of Waverley is one of the greatest teachers of morality that ever lived, by emancipating the mind from petty, narrow, and bigoted prejudices: Lord Byron is the greatest pamperer of those prejudices, by seeming to think there is nothing else worth encouraging but the seeds or the full luxuriant growth of dogmatism and self-conceit. In reading the *Scotch Novels*, we never think about the

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author, except from a feeling of curiosity respecting our unknown benefactor: in reading Lord Byron's works, he himself is never absent from our minds. The colouring of Lord Byron's style, however rich and dipped in Tyrian dyes, is nevertheless opaque, is in itself an object of delight and wonder: Sir Walter Scott's is perfectly transparent. In studying the one, you seem to gaze at the figures cut in stained glass, which exclude the view beyond, and where the pure light of Heaven is only a means of setting off the gorgeousness of art: in reading the other, you look through a noble window at the clear and varied landscape without. Or to sum up the distinction in one word, Sir Walter Scott is the most *dramatic* writer now living, and Lord Byron is the least so.

It would be difficult to imagine that the Author of Waverley is in the smallest degree a pedant, as it would be hard to persuade ourselves that the author of Childe Harold and Don Juan is not a coxcomb, though a provoking and sublime one. In this decided preference given to Sir Walter Scott over Lord Byron, we distinctly include the prose-works of the former; for we do not think his poetry alone by any means entitles him to that precedence. Sir Walter in his poetry, though pleasing and natural, is a comparative trifler: it is in his anonymous productions that he has shown himself for what he is.

Intensity is the great and prominent distinction of Lord Byron's writings. He seldom gets beyond force of style, nor has he produced any regular work or masterly whole. He does not prepare any plan beforehand, nor revise and retouch what he has written with polished accuracy. His only object seems to be to stimulate himself and his readers for the moment—to keep both alive, to drive away *ennui*, to substitute a feverish and

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irritable state of excitement for listless indolence or even calm enjoyment. For this purpose he pitches on any subject at random without much thought or delicacy. He is only impatient to begin, and takes care to adorn and enrich it as he proceeds with "thoughts that breathe and words that burn." He composes (as he himself has said) whether he is in the bath, in his study, or on horseback; he writes as habitually as others talk or think; and whether we have the inspiration of the Muse or not, we always find the spirit of the man of genius breathing from his verse. He grapples with his subject, and moves, penetrates and animates it by the electric force of his own feelings. He is often monotonous, extravagant, offensive; but he is never dull or tedious, but when he writes prose.

Lord Byron does not exhibit a new view of nature, or raise insignificant objects into importance by the romantic associations with which he surrounds them, but generally (at least) takes common-place thoughts and events, and endeavours to express them in stronger and statelier language than others. His poetry stands like a Martello tower by the side of his subject. He does not, like Mr. Wordsworth, lift poetry from the ground, or create a sentiment out of nothing. He does not describe a daisy or a periwinkle, but the cedar or the cypress: not "poor men's cottages, but princes' palaces." His *Childe Harold* contains a lofty and impassioned review of the great events of history, of the mighty objects left as wrecks of time; but he dwells chiefly on what is familiar to the mind of every school-boy, has brought out few new traits of feeling or thought, and has done no more than justice to the reader's preconceptions by the sustained force and brilliancy of his style and imagery.

Lord Byron's earlier productions, *Lara*, the *Corsair*,

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&c. were wild and gloomy romances, put into rapid and shining verse. They discover the madness of poetry, together with the inspiration: sullen, moody, capricious, fierce, inexorable: gloating on beauty, thirsting for revenge: hurrying from the extremes of pleasure to pain, but with nothing permanent, nothing healthy or natural. The gaudy decorations and the morbid sentiments remind one of flowers strewed over the face of death! In his *Childe Harold* (as has been just observed) he assumes a lofty and philosophic tone, and "reasons high of providence, fore-knowledge, will, and fate." He takes the highest points in the history of the world, and comments on them from a more commanding eminence. He shows us the crumbling monuments of time; he invokes the great names, the mighty spirit of antiquity. The universe is changed into a stately mausoleum: in solemn measures he chaunts a hymn to fame. Lord Byron has strength and elevation enough to fill up the moulds of our classical and time-hallowed recollections, and to rekindle the earliest aspirations of the mind after greatness and true glory with a pen of fire. The names of Tasso, of Ariosto, of Dante, of Cincinnatus, of Cæsar, of Scipio, lose nothing of their pomp or their lustre in his hands, and when he begins and continues a strain of panegyric on such subjects, we indeed sit down with him to a banquet of rich praise, brooding over imperishable glories,

"Till Contemplation has her fill."

Lord Byron seems to cast himself indignantly from "this bank and shoal of time," or the frail tottering bark that bears up modern reputation, into the huge sea of ancient renown, and to revel there with untired, outspread plume. Even this in him is spleen; his contempt of his contemporaries makes him turn back to the lustrous past, or project himself forward to the dim

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future! Lord Byron's tragedies, *Faliero*,[1] *Sardanapalus*,[2] &c. are not equal to his other works. They want the essence of the drama. They abound in speeches and descriptions, such as he himself might make either to himself or others, lolling on his couch of a morning, but do not carry the reader out of the poet's mind to the scenes and events recorded. They have neither action, character, nor interest, but are a sort of *gossamer* tragedies, spun out and glittering, and spreading a flimsy veil over the face of nature. Yet he spins them on. Of all that he has done in this way the *Heaven and Earth* (the same subject as Mr. Moore's *Loves of the Angels*) is the best. We prefer it even to *Manfred*. *Manfred* is merely himself with a fancy-drapery on. But, in the dramatic fragment published in the *Liberal*, the space between Heaven and earth, the stage on which his characters have to pass to and fro, seems to fill his Lordship's imagination; and the Deluge, which he has so finely described, may be said to have drowned all his own idle humours.

We must say we think little of our author's turn for satire. His "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" is dogmatical and insolent, but without refinement or point. He calls people names, and tries to transfix a character with an epithet, which does not stick, because it has no other foundation than his own petulance and spite; or he endeavours to degrade by alluding to some circumstance of external situation. He says of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry, that "it is his aversion." That may be: but whose fault is it? This is the satire of a

[1] "Don Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
My Leipsic, and my Mont St. Jean seems Cain."
Don Juan, Canto XI.

[2] Hazlitt had had a paper on Sardanapalus in the Edinburgh Review for 1822.—Ed.

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lord, who is accustomed to have all his whims or dislikes taken for gospel, and who cannot be at the pains to do more than signify his contempt or displeasure. If a great man meets with a rebuff which he does not like, he turns on his heel, and this passes for a repartee. The Noble Author says of a celebrated barrister and critic, that he was "born in a garret sixteen stories high."[1] The insinuation is not true, or, if it were, it is low. The allusion degrades the person who makes it, not him to whom it is applied. This is also the satire of a person of birth and quality, who measures all merit by external rank, that is, by his own standard. So his Lordship, in a "Letter to the Editor of my Grandmother's Review," addresses him fifty times as "*my dear Robarts;*" nor is there any other wit in the article. This is surely a mere assumption of superiority from his Lordship's rank, and is the sort of *quizzing* he might use to a person who came to hire himself as a valet to him at *Long's*. The waiters might laugh; the public will not. In like manner, in the controversy about Pope, he claps Mr. Bowles on the back with a coarse facetious familiarity, as if he were his chaplain whom he had invited to dine with him, or was about to present to a benefice. The reverend divine might submit to the obligation; but he has no occasion to subscribe to the jest. If it is a jest that Mr. Bowles should be a parson and Lord Byron a peer, the world knew this before; there was no need to write a pamphlet to prove it.

The *Don Juan* indeed has great power; but its power

[1] Jeffrey is the person to whom Byron refers. But the passage runs:—

"The Tolbooth felt defrauded of his charms,
If Jeffrey died except within her arms:
Nay last, not least, on that portentous morn,
The sixteenth story, where himself was born,
His patrimonial garret, fell to ground"—Ed.

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is owing to the force of the serious writing, and to the contrast between that and the flashy passages with which it is interlarded. From the sublime to the ridiculous there is but one step. You laugh and are surprised that any one should turn round and *travestie* himself: the drollery is in the utter discontinuity of ideas and feelings. He makes virtue serve as a foil to vice; *dandyism* is (for want of any other) a variety of genius. A classical intoxication is followed by the splashing of sodawater, by frothy effusions of ordinary bile. After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin and the contents of the washhand basins. The solemn hero of tragedy plays *Scrub* in the farce.[1] This is "very tolerable and not to be endured."

The noble Lord is almost the only writer who has prostituted his talents in this way. He hallows in order to desecrate, takes a pleasure in defacing the images of beauty his hands have wrought, and raises our hopes and our belief in goodness to Heaven only to dash them to the earth again, and break them in pieces the more effectually from the very height they have fallen. Our enthusiasm for genius or virtue is thus turned into a jest by the very person who has kindled it, and who thus fatally quenches the spark of both. It is not that Lord Byron is sometines serious and sometimes trifling, sometimes profligate and sometimes moral; but when he is most serious and most moral, he is only preparing to mortify the unsuspecting reader by putting a pitiful *hoax* upon him. This is a most unaccountable anomaly. It is as if the eagle were to build its eyry in a common sewer, or the owl were seen soaring to the mid-day sun.

[1] Or rather in Farquhar's comedy of the *Beaux Stratagem*.—Ed.

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Such a sight might make one laugh, but one would not wish or expect it to occur more than once![1]

In fact, Lord Byron is the spoiled child of fame as well as fortune. He has taken a surfeit of popularity, and is not contented to delight, unless he can shock, the public. He would force them to admire in spite of decency and common sense; he would have them read what they would read in no one but himself, or he would not give a rush for their applause. He is to be "a chartered libertine," from whom insults are favours, whose contempt is to be a new incentive to admiration. His Lordship is hard to please: he is equally averse to notice or neglect, enraged at censure and scorning praise. He tries the patience of the town to the very utmost, and when they show signs of weariness or disgust, threatens to *discard* them. He says he will write on, whether he is read or not. He would never write another page, if it were not to court popular applause, or to affect a superiority over it. In this respect also, Lord Byron presents a striking contrast to Sir Walter Scott. The latter takes what part of the public favour falls to his share, without grumbling (to be sure, he has no reason to complain); the former is always quarrelling with the world about his *modicum* of applause, the *spolia opima* of vanity, and ungraciously throwing the offerings of incense heaped on his shrine back in the faces of his admirers.

Again, there is no taint in the writings of the Author of *Waverley;* all is fair and natural and *above-board;* he never outrages the public mind. He introduces no anomalous character, broaches no staggering opinion. If he goes back to old prejudices and superstitions as a

[1] This censure applies to the first Cantos of DON JUAN much more than to the last. It has been called a TRISTRAM SHANDY in rhyme: it is rather a poem written about itself.

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relief to the modern reader, while Lord Byron floats on swelling paradoxes—

"Like proud seas under him;"

if the one defers too much to the spirit of antiquity, the other panders to the spirit of the age, goes to the very edge of extreme and licentious speculation, and breaks his neck over it. Grossness and levity are the playthings of his pen. It is a ludicrous circumstance that he should have dedicated his *Cain* to the worthy Baronet![1] Did the latter ever acknowledge the obligation? We are not nice, not very nice; but we do not particularly approve those subjects that shine chiefly from their rottenness: nor do we wish to see the Muses drest out in the flounces of a false or questionable philosophy, like Portia and Nerissa in the garb of Doctors of Law. We like metaphysics as well as Lord Byron; but not to see them making flowery speeches, nor dancing a measure in the fetters of verse. We have as good as hinted, that his Lordship's poetry consists mostly of a tissue of superb common-places; even his paradoxes are *commonplace.* They are familiar in the schools: they are only new and striking in his dramas and stanzas by being out of place. In a word, we think that poetry moves best within the circle of nature and received opinion: speculative theory and subtle casuistry are forbidden ground to it.

But Lord Byron often wanders into this ground wantonly, wilfully, and unwarrantably. The only apology we can conceive for the spirit of some of Lord Byron's writings, is the spirit of some of those opposed to him. They would provoke a man to write any thing. "Farthest from them is best." The extravagance and license of the one seems a proper antidote to the bigotry and nar-

[1] Scott.

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rowness of the other. The first *Vision of Judgment* was a set-off to the second, though

"None but itself could be its parallel."

Perhaps the chief cause of most of Lord Byron's errors is, that he is that anomaly in letters and in society, a Noble Poet. It is a double privilege, almost too much for humanity. He has all the pride of birth and genius. The strength of his imagination leads him to indulge in fantastic opinions; the elevation of his rank sets censure at defiance. He becomes a pampered egotist. He has a seat in the House of Lords, a niche in the Temple of Fame. Every-day mortals, opinions, things are not good enough for him to touch or think of. A mere nobleman is, in his estimation, but "the tenth transmitter of a foolish face:" a mere man of genius is no better than a worm. His Muse is also a lady of quality. The people are not polite enough for him; the Court is not sufficiently intellectual. He hates the one and despises the other. By hating and despising others, he does not learn to be satisfied with himself. A fastidious man soon grows querulous and splenetic. If there is nobody but ourselves to come up to our idea of fancied perfection, we easily get tired of our idol.

When a man is tired of what he is, by a natural perversity he sets up for what he is not. If he is a poet, he pretends to be a metaphysician: if he is a patrician in rank and feeling, he would fain be one of the people. His ruling motive is not the love of the people, but of distinction: not of truth, but of singularity. He patronizes men of letters out of vanity, and deserts them from caprice or from the advice of friends. He embarks in an obnoxious publication [1] to provoke censure, and leaves it to shift for itself for fear of scandal. We

[1] *The Liberal*, 2 vols. 8vo, 1824.—Ed.

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do not like Sir Walter's gratuitous servility: we like Lord Byron's preposterous *liberalism* little better. He may affect the principles of equality, but he resumes his privilege of peerage, upon occasion. His Lordship has made great offers of service to the Greeks—money and horses. He is at present in Cephalonia, waiting the event!

* * * * * * *

We had written thus far when news came of the death of Lord Byron,[1] and put an end at once to a strain of somewhat peevish invective, which was intended to meet his eye, not to insult his memory. Had we known that we were writing his epitaph, we must have donè it with a different feeling. As it is, we think it better and more like himself, to let what we had written stand, than to take up our leaden shafts, and try to melt them into "tears of sensibility," or mould them into dull praise and an affected show of candour. We were not silent during the author's life-time, either for his reproof or encouragement (such as we could give, and *he* did not disdain to accept) nor can we now turn undertakers' men to fix the glittering plate upon his coffin, or fall into the procession of popular woe. Death cancels every thing but truth, and strips a man of every thing but genius and virtue. It is a sort of natural canonization. It makes the meanest of us sacred; it installs the poet in his immortality, and lifts him to the skies. Death is the great assayer of the sterling ore of talent. At his touch the drossy particles fall off: the irritable, the personal, the gross, and mingle with the dust—the finer and more ethereal part mounts with the winged spirit to watch over our latest memory, and protect our bones from insult. We consign the least worthy qualities to oblivion,

[1] On the 19th April, 1824.

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and cherish the nobler and imperishable nature with double pride and fondness.

Nothing could show the real superiority of genius in a more striking point of view than the idle contests and the public indifference about the place of Lord Byron's interment, whether in Westminster Abbey or his own family vault. A king must have a coronation—a nobleman a funeral-procession. The man is nothing without the pageant. The poet's cemetery is the human mind, in which he sows the seeds of never-ending thought—his monument is to be found in his works:

> "Nothing can cover his high fame but Heaven;
> No pyramids set off his memory,
> But the eternal substance of his greatness."

Lord Byron is dead: he also died a martyr to his zeal in the cause of freedom, for the last, best hopes of man. Let that be his excuse and his epitaph!

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MR. SOUTHEY.

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MR. SOUTHEY.

MR. SOUTHEY, as we formerly remember to have seen him, had a hectic flush upon his cheek, a roving fire in his eye, a falcon glance, a look at once aspiring and dejected. It was the look that had been impressed upon his face by the events that marked the outset of his life. It was the dawn of Liberty that still tinged his cheek, a smile betwixt hope and sadness that still played upon his quivering lip. Mr. Southey's mind is essentially sanguine, even to over-weeningness. It is prophetic of good; it cordially embraces it; it casts a longing, lingering look after it, even when it is gone for ever. He cannot bear to give up the thought of happiness, his confidence in his fellow-man, when all else despair. It is the very element, "where he must live or have no life at all." While he supposed it possible that a better form of society could be introduced than any that had hitherto existed, while the light of the French Revolution beamed into his soul (and long after, it was seen reflected on his brow, like the light of setting suns on the peak of some high mountain, or lonely range of clouds, floating in purer ether!)—while he had this hope, this faith in man left, he cherished it with child-like simplicity, he clung to it with the fondness of a lover. He was an enthusiast, a fanatic, a leveller; he stuck at nothing that he thought would banish all pain and misery from the world; in his impatience of the smallest error or injustice, he would have sacrificed himself and

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the existing generation (a holocaust) to his devotion to the right cause. But when he once believed after many staggering doubts and painful struggles, that this was no longer possible, when his chimeras and golden dreams of human perfectibility vanished from him, he turned suddenly round, and maintained that "whatever *is*, is right."

Mr. Southey has not fortitude of mind, has not patience to think that evil is inseparable from the nature of things. His irritable sense rejects the alternative altogether, as a weak stomach rejects the food that is distasteful to it. He hopes on against hope: he believes in all unbelief. He must either repose on actual or on imaginary good. He missed his way in *Utopia:* he has found it at Old Sarum—

"His generous *ardour* no cold medium knows:"

his eagerness admits of no doubt or delay. He is ever in extremes, and ever in the wrong!

The reason is, that not truth, but self-opinion is the ruling principle of Mr. Southey's mind. The charm of novelty, the applause of the multitude, the sanction of power, the venerableness of antiquity: pique, resentment, the spirit of contradiction, have a good deal to do with his preferences. His inquiries are partial and hasty, his conclusions raw and unconcocted, and with a considerable infusion of whim and humour and a monkish spleen. His opinions are like certain wines, warm and generous when new; but they will not keep, and soon turn flat or sour, for want of a stronger spirit of the understanding to give a body to them. He wooed Liberty as a youthful lover, but it was perhaps more as a mistress than a bride; and he has since wedded with an elderly and not very reputable lady, called Legitimacy.

A wilful man, according to the Scotch proverb, *must have*

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his way. If it were the cause to which he was sincerely attached, he would adhere to it through good report and evil report; but it is himself to whom he does homage, and would have others do so; and he therefore changes sides, rather than submit to apparent defeat or temporary mortification. Abstract principle has no rule but the understood distinction between right and wrong; the indulgence of vanity, of caprice, or prejudice is regulated by the convenience or bias of the moment. The temperament of our politician's mind is poetical, not philosophical. He is more the creature of impulse, than he is of reflection. He invents the unreal; he embellishes the false with the glosses of fancy, but pays little attention to "the words of truth and soberness." His impressions are accidental, immediate, personal, instead of being permanent and universal. Of all mortals he is surely the most impatient of contradiction, even when he has completely turned the tables on himself. Is not this very inconsistency the reason? Is he not tenacious of his opinions, in proportion as they are brittle and hastily formed? Is he not jealous of the grounds of his belief, because he fears they will not bear inspection, or is conscious he has shifted them? Does he not confine others to the strict line of orthodoxy, because he has himself taken every liberty? Is he not afraid to look to the right or the left, lest he should see the ghosts of his former extravagances staring him in the face? Does he not refuse to tolerate the smallest shade of difference in others, because he feels that he wants the utmost latitude of construction for differing so widely from himself? Is he not captious, dogmatical, petulant in delivering his sentiments, according as he has been inconsistent, rash, and fanciful in adopting them? He maintains that there can be no possible ground for differing from him, because he looks only at his own side

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of the question! He sets up his own favourite notions as the standard of reason and honesty, because he has changed from one extreme to another! He treats his opponents with contempt, because he is himself afraid of meeting with disrespect! He says that "a Reformer is a worse character than a housebreaker," in order to stifle the recollection that he himself once was one!

We must say that "we relish Mr. Southey more in the Reformer" than in his lately acquired, but by no means natural or becoming character of poet-laureat and courtier. He may rest assured that a garland of wild flowers suits him better than the laureat-wreath: that his pastoral odes and popular inscriptions were far more adapted to his genius than his presentation-poems. He is nothing akin to birth-day suits and drawing-room fopperies. "He is nothing if not fantastical." In his figure, in his movements, in his sentiments, he is sharp and angular, quaint and eccentric. Mr. Southey is not of the court, courtly. Every thing of him and about him is from the people. He is not classical: he is not legitimate. He is not a man cast in the mould of other men's opinions: he is not shaped on any model: he bows to no authority: he yields only to his own wayward peculiarities. He is wild, irregular, singular, extreme. He is no formalist, not he! All is crude and chaotic, self-opinionated, vain. He wants proportion, keeping, system, standard rules. He is not *teres et rotundus*. Mr. Southey walks with his chin erect through the streets of London, and with an umbrella sticking out under his arm, in the finest weather. He has not sacrificed to the Graces, nor studied decorum. With him every thing is projecting, starting from its place, an episode, a digression, a poetic license. He does not move in any given orbit, but, like a falling star, shoots from his sphere. He is pragmatical, restless, unfixed,

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full of experiments, beginning every thing a-new, wiser than his betters, judging for himself, dictating to others. He is decidedly *revolutionary*. He may have given up the reform of the State: but depend upon it, he has some other *hobby* of the same kind.

Does he not dedicate to his present Majesty that extraordinary poem on the death of his father, called *The Vision of Judgment*, as a specimen of what might be done in English hexameters? In a court-poem all should be trite and on an approved model. He might as well have presented himself at the levée in a fancy or masquerade dress. Mr. Southey was not *to try conclusions* with Majesty—still less on such an occasion. The extreme freedoms with departed greatness, the party-petulance carried to the Throne of Grace, the unchecked indulgence of private humour, the assumption of infallibility and even of the voice of Heaven in this poem, are pointed instances of what we have said. They show the singular state of over-excitement of Mr. Southey's mind, and the force of old habits of independent and unbridled thinking, which cannot be kept down even in addressing his Sovereign! Look at Mr. Southey's larger poems, his *Kehama*, his *Thalaba*, his *Madoc*, his *Roderic*.

Who will deny the spirit, the scope, the splendid imagery, the hurried and startling interest that pervades them? Who will say that they are not sustained on fictions wilder than his own Glendoveer, that they are not the daring creations of a mind curbed by no law, tamed by no fear: that they are not rather like the trances than the waking dreams of genius, that they are not the very paradoxes of poetry? All this is very well, very intelligible, and very harmless, if we regard the rank excrescences of Mr. Southey's poetry, like the red and blue flowers in corn, as the unweeded growth of a luxuriant and wandering fancy; or if we allow the yeasty

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workings of an ardent spirit to ferment and boil over—the variety, the boldness, the lively stimulus given to the mind may then atone for the violation of rules and the offences to bed-rid authority; but not if our poetic libertine sets up for a law-giver and judge, or an apprehender of vagrants in the regions either of taste or opinion. Our motley gentleman deserves the strait-waistcoat, if he is for setting others in the stocks of servility, or condemning them to the pillory for a new mode of rhyme or reason. Or if a composer of sacred Dramas on classic models, or a translator of an old Latin author (that will hardly bear translation) or a vamper-up of vapid cantos and Odes set to music, were to turn pander to prescription and palliater of every dull, incorrigible abuse, it would not be much to be wondered at or even regretted.

But in Mr. Southey it was a lamentable falling-off. It is indeed to be deplored; it is a stain on genius, a blow to humanity, that the author of *Joan of Arc*—that work in which the love of Liberty is exhaled like the breath of spring—mild, balmy, heaven-born,—that is full of tears and virgin-sighs and yearnings of affection after truth and good, gushing warm and crimson from the heart, should ever after turn to folly, or become the advocate of a rotten cause. After giving up his heart to that subject, he ought not (whatever others might do) ever to have set his foot within the threshold of a court. He might be sure that he would not gain forgiveness or favour by it, nor obtain a single cordial smile from greatness. All that Mr. Southey is or that he does best, is independent, spontaneous, free as the vital air he draws. When he affects the courtier or the sophist, he is obliged to put a constraint upon himself, to hold his breath: he loses his genius, and offers a violence to his nature. His characteristic faults are the

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excess of a lively, unguarded temperament:—oh! let them not degenerate into cold-blooded, heartless vices! If we speak or have ever spoken of Mr. Southey with severity, it is with "the malice of old friends," for we count ourselves among his sincerest and heartiest well-wishers. But while he himself is anomalous, incalculable, eccentric, from youth to age (the *Wat Tyler* and the *Vision of Judgment* are the Alpha and Omega of his disjointed career): full of sallies of humour, of ebullitions of spleen, making *jets-d'eaux*, cascades, fountains, and waterworks of his idle opinions, he would shut up the wits of others in leaden cisterns, to stagnate and corrupt, or bury them under ground—

"Far from the sun and summer gale!"

He would suppress the freedom of wit and humour, of which he has set the example, and claim a privilege for playing antics. He would introduce an uniformity of intellectual weights and measures, of irregular metres and settled opinions, and enforce it with a high hand.

This has been judged hard by some, and has brought down a severity of recrimination, perhaps disproportioned to the injury done. "Because he is virtuous," (it has been asked,) "are there to be no more cakes and ale?" Because he is loyal, are we to take all our notions from the *Quarterly Review?* Because he is orthodox, are we to do nothing but read the *Book of the Church?* We declare we think his former poetical scepticism was not only more amiable, but had more the spirit of religion in it, implied a more heartfelt trust in nature and providence than his present bigotry. We are at the same time free to declare that we think his articles in the *Quarterly Review*, notwithstanding their virulence and the talent they display, have a tendency to qualify its most pernicious effects. They have redeeming traits in them.

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"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump;" and the spirit of humanity (thanks to Mr. Southey) is not quite expelled from the *Quarterly Review*. At the corner of his pen, "there hangs a vapourous drop profound" of independence and liberality, which falls upon its pages, and oozes out through the pores of the public mind. There is a fortunate difference between writers whose hearts are naturally callous to truth, and whose understandings are hermetically sealed against all impressions but those of self-interest, and a man like Mr. Southey. *Once a philanthropist and always a philanthropist.* No man can entirely baulk his nature: it breaks out in spite of him. In all those questions, where the spirit of contradiction does not interfere, on which he is not sore from old bruises, or sick from the extravagance of youthful intoxication, as from a last night's debauch, our laureate is still bold, free, candid, open to conviction, a reformist without knowing it. He does not advocate the slave-trade, he does not arm Mr. Malthus's revolting ratios with his authority, he does not strain hard to deluge Ireland with blood. On such points, where humanity has not become obnoxious, where liberty has not passed into a by-word, Mr. Southey is still liberal and humane. The elasticity of his spirit is unbroken: the bow recoils to its old position. He still stands convicted of his early passion for inquiry and improvement. He was not regularly articled as a government-tool!

Perhaps the most pleasing and striking of all Mr. Southey's poems are not his triumphant taunts hurled against oppression, are not his glowing effusions to Liberty, but those in which, with a mild melancholy, he seems conscious of his own infirmities of temper, and to feel a wish to correct by thought and time the precocity and sharpness of his disposition. May the quaint but

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affecting aspiration expressed in one of these be fulfilled, that, as he mellows into maturer age, all such asperities may wear off, and he himself become

"Like the high leaves upon the holly-tree!"

Mr. Southey's prose-style can scarcely be too much praised. It is plain, clear, pointed, familiar: perfectly modern in its texture, but with a grave and sparkling admixture of *archaisms* in its ornaments and occasional phraseology. He is the best and most natural prose-writer of any poet of the day; we mean that he is far better than Lord Byron, Mr. Wordsworth, or Mr. Coleridge, for instance. The manner is perhaps superior to the matter—that is, in his Essays and Reviews. There is rather a want of originality and even of *impetus:* but there is no want of playful or biting satire, of ingenuity, of casuistry, of learning and of information. He is "full of wise saws and modern" (as well as ancient) "instances." Mr. Southey may not always convince his opponents; but he seldom fails to stagger, never to gall them. In a word, we may describe his style by saying that it has not the body or thickness of port wine, but is like clear sherry with kernels of old authors thrown into it!

He also excels as an historian and prose translator. His histories abound in information, and exhibit proofs of the most indefatigable patience and industry. By no uncommon process of the mind, Mr. Southey seems willing to steady the extreme levity of his opinions and feelings by an appeal to facts. His translations of the Spanish and French romances are also executed *con amore*, and with the literal fidelity and care of a mere linguist. That of the *Cid*, in particular, is a masterpiece. Not a word could be altered for the better in the old scriptural style which it adopts in conformity to the original. It is no

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less interesting in itself, or as a record of high and chivalrous feelings and manners, than it is worthy of perusal as a literary curiosity.

Mr. Southey's conversation has a little resemblance to a common-place book, his habitual deportment to a piece of clock-work. He is not remarkable either as a reasoner or an observer: but he is quick, unaffected, replete with anecdote, various and retentive in his reading, and exceedingly happy in his play upon words, as most scholars are who give their minds this sportive turn. We have chiefly seen Mr. Southey in company where few people appear to advantage, we mean in that of Mr. Coleridge. He has not certainly the same range of speculation, nor the same flow of sounding words; but he makes up by the details of knowledge and by a scrupulous correctness of statement for what he wants in originality of thought or impetuous declamation. The tones of Mr. Coleridge's voice are eloquence: those of Mr. Southey are meagre, shrill, and dry. Mr. Coleridge's *forte* is conversation, and he is conscious of this: Mr. Southey evidently considers writing as his stronghold, and if gravelled in an argument, or at a loss for an explanation, refers to something he has written on the subject, or brings out his port-folio, doubled down in dog-ears, in confirmation of some fact.[1]

He is scholastic and professional in his ideas. He sets more value on what he writes than on what he says: he is perhaps prouder of his library than of his

[1] It is perhaps fair to Southey to suggest that most men, who devote themselves to the accumulation of scattered facts on a great variety of subjects, seldom retain vivid or correct impressions of all the matters which have passed through their minds, and been brought to bear on what was immediately before them, or been committed to memorandum-books—the portfolios of the text. It is not as with the pure thinker or student. New subjects are apt to push out the old.—Ed.

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own productions—themselves a library! He is more simple in his manners than his friend Mr. Coleridge, but at the same time less cordial or conciliating. He is less vain, or has less hope of pleasing, and therefore lays himself less out to please. There is an air of condescension in his civility. With a tall, loose figure, a peaked austerity of countenance, and no inclination to *embonpoint*, you would say he has something puritanical, something ascetic in his appearance. He answers to Mandeville's description of Addison, "a parson in a tye-wig." He is not a boon companion, nor does he indulge in the pleasures of the table, nor in any other vice; nor are we aware that Mr. Southey is chargeable with any human frailty but *want of charity!* Having fewer errors to plead guilty to, he is less lenient to those of others. He was born an age too late. Had he lived a century or two ago, he would have been a happy as well as blameless character. But the distraction of the time has unsettled him, and the multiplicity of his pretensions have jostled with each other. No man in our day (at least no man of genius) has led so uniformly and entirely the life of a scholar from boyhood to the present hour, devoting himself to learning with the enthusiasm of an early love, with the severity and constancy of a religious vow; and well would it have been for him if he had confined himself to this, and not undertaken to pull down or to patch up the State! However irregular in his opinions, Mr. Southey is constant, unremitting, mechanical in his studies and the performance of his duties. There is nothing Pindaric or Shandean here. In all the relations and charities of private life, he is correct, exemplary, generous, just. We never heard a single impropriety laid to his charge; and if he has many enemies, few men can boast more numerous or stauncher friends.

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The variety and piquancy of his writings form a striking contrast to the mode in which they are produced. He rises early, and writes or reads till breakfast-time. He writes or reads after breakfast till dinner, after dinner till tea, and from tea till bed-time—

> "And follows so the ever-running year
> With profitable labour to his grave—"

on Derwent's banks, beneath the foot of Skiddaw. Study serves him for business, exercise, recreation. He passes from verse to prose, from history to poetry, from reading to writing, by a stop-watch. He writes a fair hand without blots, sitting upright in his chair leaves off when he comes to the bottom of the page, and changes the subject for another, as opposite as the Antipodes. His mind is after all rather the recipient and transmitter of knowledge, than the originator of it. He has hardly grasp of thought enough to arrive at any great leading truth. His passions do not amount to more than irritability. With some gall in his pen and coldness in his manner, he has a great deal of kindness in his heart. Rash in his opinions, he is steady in his attachments, and is a man, in many particulars admirable, in all respectable—his political inconsistency alone excepted!

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MR. WORDSWORTH.

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MR. WORDSWORTH.

MR. WORDSWORTH'S genius is a pure emanation of the Spirit of the Age. Had he lived in any other period of the world, he would never have been heard of. As it is, he has some difficulty to contend with the hebetude of his intellect and the meanness of his subject. With him "lowliness is young ambition's ladder:" but he finds it a toil to climb in this way the steep of Fame. His homely Muse can hardly raise her wing from the ground, nor spread her hidden glories to the sun. He has "no figures nor no fantasies, which busy *passion* draws in the brains of men:" neither the gorgeous machinery of mythologic lore, nor the splendid colours of poetic diction. His style is vernacular: he delivers household truths. He sees nothing loftier than human hopes, nothing deeper than the human heart. This he probes, this he tampers with, this he poises, with all its incalculable weight of thought and feeling, in his hands, and at the same time calms the throbbing pulses of his own heart by keeping his eye ever fixed on the face of nature. If he can make the life-blood flow from the wounded breast, this is the living colouring with which he paints his verse: if he can assuage the pain or close up the wound with the balm of solitary musing, or the healing power of plants and herbs and "skyey influences," this is the sole triumph of his art. He takes the simplest elements of nature and of the

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human mind, the mere abstract conditions inseparable from our being, and tries to compound a new system of poetry from them; and [he] has perhaps succeeded as well as any one could. "*Nihil humani a me alienum puto*" is the motto of his works. He thinks nothing low or indifferent of which this can be affirmed: every thing that professes to be more than this, that is not an absolute essence of truth and feeling, he holds to be vitiated, false and spurious. In a word, his poetry is founded on setting up an opposition (and pushing it to the utmost length) between the natural and the artificial, between the spirit of humanity and the spirit of fashion and of the world.

It is one of the innovations of the time. It partakes of, and is carried along with, the revolutionary movement of our age: the political changes of the day were the model on which he formed and conducted his poetical experiments. His Muse (it cannot be denied, and without this we cannot explain its character at all) is a levelling one. It proceeds on a principle of equality, and strives to reduce all things to the same standard. It is distinguished by a proud humility. It relies upon its own resources, and disdains external show and relief. It takes the commonest events and objects, as a test to prove that nature is always interesting from its inherent truth and beauty, without any of the ornaments of dress or pomp of circumstances to set it off. Hence the unaccountable mixture of seeming simplicity and real abstruseness in the *Lyrical Ballads*. Fools have laughed at, wise men scarcely understand, them. He takes a subject or a story merely as pegs or loops to hang thought and feeling on; the incidents are trifling, in proportion to his contempt for imposing appearances; the reflections are profound, according to the gravity and aspiring pretensions of his mind.

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His popular, inartificial style gets rid (at a blow) of all the trappings of verse, of all the high places of poetry: "the cloud-capt towers, the solemn temples, the gorgeous palaces," are swept to the ground, and "like the baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind." All the traditions of learning, all the superstitions of age, are obliterated and effaced. We begin *de novo* on a *tabula rasa* of poetry. The purple pall, the nodding plume of tragedy are exploded as mere pantomime and trick, to return to the simplicity of truth and nature. Kings, queens, priests, nobles, the altar and the throne, the distinctions of rank, birth, wealth, power, "the judge's robe, the marshal's truncheon, the ceremony that to great ones 'longs," are not to be found here. The author tramples on the pride of art with greater pride. The Ode and Epode, the Strophe and the Antistrophe, he laughs to scorn. The harp of Homer, the trump of Pindar and of Alcæus, are still. The decencies of costume, the decorations of vanity are stripped off without mercy as barbarous, idle, and Gothic. The jewels in the crisped hair, the diadem on the polished brow, are thought meretricious, theatrical, vulgar; and nothing contents his fastidious taste beyond a simple garland of flowers. Neither does he avail himself of the advantages which nature or accident holds out to him. He chooses to have his subject a foil to his invention, to owe nothing but to himself.

He gathers manna in the wilderness; he strikes the barren rock for the gushing moisture. He elevates the mean by the strength of his own aspirations; he clothes the naked with beauty and grandeur from the stores of his own recollections No cypress grove loads his verse with funeral pomp: but his imagination lends "a sense of joy

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> "To the bare trees and mountains bare,
> And grass in the green field."

No storm, no shipwreck startles us by its horrors: but the rainbow lifts its head in the cloud, and the breeze sighs through the withered fern. No sad vicissitude of fate, no overwhelming catastrophe in nature deforms his page: but the dew-drop glitters on the bending flower, the tear collects in the glistening eye.

> "Beneath the hills, along the flowery vales,
> The generations are prepared; the pangs,
> The internal pangs are ready; the dread strife
> Of poor humanity's afflicted will,
> Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

As the lark ascends from its low bed on fluttering wing, and salutes the morning skies, so Mr. Wordsworth's unpretending Muse in russet guise scales the summits of reflection, while it makes the round earth its footstool and its home!

Possibly a good deal of this may be regarded as the effect of disappointed views and an inverted ambition. Prevented by native pride and indolence from climbing the ascent of learning or greatness, taught by political opinions to say to the vain pomp and glory of the world, "I hate ye," seeing the path of classical and artificial poetry blocked up by the cumbrous ornaments of style and turgid *common-places*, so that nothing more could be achieved in that direction but by the most ridiculous bombast or the tamest servility, he has turned back, partly from the bias of his mind, partly perhaps from a judicious policy—has struck into the sequestered vale of humble life, sought out the Muse among sheep-cotes and hamlets, and the peasant's mountain-haunts, has discarded all the tinsel pageantry of verse, and endeavoured (not in vain) to aggrandise the trivial, and add the charm of novelty to the familiar. No one has shown

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the same imagination in raising trifles into importance: no one has displayed the same pathos in treating of the simplest feelings of the heart. Reserved, yet haughty, having no unruly or violent passions, (or those passions having been early suppressed,) Mr. Wordsworth has passed his life in solitary musing or in daily converse with the face of nature. He exemplifies in an eminent degree the *association;* for his poetry has no other source or character. He has dwelt among pastoral scenes, till each object has become connected with a thousand feelings, a link in the chain of thought, a fibre of his own heart. Every one is by habit and familiarity strongly attached to the place of his birth, or to objects that recal the most pleasing and eventful circumstances of his life.

But to the author of the *Lyrical Ballads* nature is a kind of home; and he may be said to take a personal interest in the universe. There is no image so insignificant that it has not in some mood or other found the way into his heart: no sound that does not awaken the memory of other years.—

> "To him the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

The daisy looks up to him with sparkling eye as an old acquaintance: the cuckoo haunts him with sounds of early youth not to be expressed: a linnet's nest startles him with boyish delight: an old withered thorn is weighed down with a heap of recollections: a grey cloak, seen on some wild moor, torn by the wind or drenched in the rain, afterwards becomes an object of imagination to him: even the lichens on the rock have a life and being in his thoughts. He has described all these objects in a way and with an intensity of feeling that no one else had done before him, and has given a new view or aspect of nature. He is in this sense the most original poet now living, and the one whose writ-

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ings could the least be spared: for they have no substitute elsewhere. The vulgar do not read them; the learned, who see all things through books, do not understand them; the great despise. The fashionable may ridicule them: but the author has created himself an interest in the heart of the retired and lonely student of nature, which can never die.

Persons of this class will still continue to feel what he has felt: he has expressed what they might in vain wish to express, except with glistening eye and faltering tongue! There is a lofty philosophic tone, a thoughtful humanity, infused into his pastoral vein. Remote from the passions and events of the great world, he has communicated interest and dignity to the primal movements of the heart of man, and ingrafted his own conscious reflections on the casual thoughts of hinds and shepherds. Nursed amidst the grandeur of mountain scenery, he has stooped to have a nearer view of the daisy under his feet, or plucked a branch of white-thorn from the spray: but, in describing it, his mind seems imbued with the majesty and solemnity of the objects around him. The tall rock lifts its head in the erectness of his spirit; the cataract roars in the sound of his verse; and in its dim and mysterious meaning the mists seem to gather in the hollows of Helvellyn, and the forked Skiddaw hovers in the distance. There is little mention of mountainous scenery in Mr. Wordsworth's poetry; but by internal evidence one might be almost sure that it was written in a mountainous country, from its bareness, its simplicity, its loftiness and its depth!

His later philosophic productions have a somewhat different character. They are a departure from, a dereliction of, his first principles. They are classical and courtly. They are polished in style without being gaudy, dignified in subject without affectation. They seem to have

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been composed not in a cottage at Grasmere, but among the half-inspired groves and stately recollections of Cole-Orton. We might allude in particular, for examples of what we mean, to the lines on a Picture by Claude Lorraine and to the exquisite poem, entitled *Laodamia.* The last of these breathes the pure spirit of the finest fragments of antiquity—the sweetness, the gravity, the strength, the beauty and the languor of death—

"Calm contemplation and majestic pains."

Its glossy brilliancy arises from the perfection of the finishing, like that of a careful sculpture, not from gaudy colouring. The texture of the thoughts has the smoothness and solidity of marble. It is a poem that might be read aloud in Elysium, and the spirits of departed heroes and sages would gather round to listen to it!

Mr. Wordsworth's philosophic poetry, with a less glowing aspect and less tumult in the veins than Lord Byron's on similar occasions, bends a calmer and keener eye on mortality; the impression, if less vivid, is more pleasing and permanent; and we confess it (perhaps it is a want of taste and proper feeling) that there are lines and poems of our author's, that we think of ten times for once that we recur to any of Lord Byron's. Or if there are any of the latter's writings, that we can dwell upon in the same way, that is, as lasting and heart-felt sentiments, it is when laying aside his usual pomp and pretension, he descends with Mr. Wordsworth to the common ground of a disinterested humanity. It may be considered as characteristic of our poet's writings, that they either make no impression on the mind at all, seem mere *nonsense-verses*, or that they leave a mark behind them that never wears out. They either

"Fall blunted from the indurated breast"—

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without any perceptible result, or they absorb it like a passion. To one class of readers he appears sublime, to another (and we fear the largest) ridiculous. He has probably realised Milton's wish,—"and fit audience found, though few:" but we suspect he is not reconciled to the alternative.

There are delightful passages in the EXCURSION,[1] both of natural description and of inspired reflection (passages of the latter kind that in the sound of the thoughts and of the swelling language resemble heavenly symphonies, mournful *requiems* over the grave of human hopes); but we must add, in justice and in sincerity, that we think it impossible that this work should ever become popular, even in the same degree as the *Lyrical Ballads*. It affects a system without having any intelligible clue to one, and, instead of unfolding a principle in various and striking lights, repeats the same conclusions till they become flat and insipid. Mr. Wordsworth's mind is obtuse, except as it is the organ and the receptacle of accumulated feelings: it is not analytic, but synthetic; it is reflecting, rather than theoretical. The EXCURSION, we believe, fell still-born from the press. There was something abortive, and clumsy, and ill-judged in the attempt. It was long and laboured. The personages, for the most part, were low, the fare rustic; the plan raised expectations which were not fulfilled; and the effect was like being ushered into a stately hall and invited to sit down to a splendid banquet in the company of clowns, and with nothing but successive courses of apple-dumplings served up. It was not even *toujours perdrix!*

Mr. Wordsworth, in his person, is above the middle size, with marked features and an air somewhat stately

[1] Compare the criticisms on Wordsworth's *Excursion* in the *Examiner* for 1814 (partly reprinted in the *Round Table*, 1817).—ED.

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and quixotic. He reminds one of some of Holbein's heads: grave, saturnine, with a slight indication of sly humour, kept under by the manners of the age or by the pretensions of the person. He has a peculiar sweetness in his smile, and great depth and manliness and a rugged harmony in the tones of his voice. His manner of reading his own poetry is particularly imposing; and in his favourite passages his eye beams with preternatural lustre, and the meaning labours slowly up from his swelling breast. No one who has seen him at these moments could go away with an impression that he was a "man of no mark or likelihood." Perhaps the comment of his face and voice is necessary to convey a full idea of his poetry. His language may not be intelligible; but his manner is not to be mistaken. It is clear that he is either mad or inspired. In company, even in a *tête-à-tête*, Mr. Wordsworth is often silent, indolent and reserved. If he is become verbose and oracular of late years, he was not so in his better days. He threw out a bold or an indifferent remark without either effort or pretension, and relapsed into musing again. He shone most (because he seemed most roused and animated) in reciting his own poetry, or in talking about it. He sometimes gave striking views of his feelings and trains of association in composing certain passages; or if one did not always understand his distinctions, still there was no want of interest: there was a latent meaning worth inquiring into, like a vein of ore that one cannot exactly hit upon at the moment, but of which there are sure indications. His standard of poetry is high and severe, almost to exclusiveness. He admits of nothing below, scarcely of anything above, himself. It is fine to hear him talk of the way in which certain subjects should have been treated by eminent poets, according to his notions of the art. Thus he finds fault with Dryden's

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description of Bacchus in the *Alexander's Feast*, as if he were a mere good-looking youth or boon companion—

> " Flushed with a purple grace,
> He shows his honest face "—

instead of representing the God returning from the conquest of India, crowned with vine-leaves and drawn by panthers, and followed by troops of satyrs, of wild men and animals that he had tamed. You would think, in hearing him speak on this subject, that you saw Titian's picture of the meeting of *Bacchus and Ariadne*—so classic were his conceptions, so glowing his style.

Milton is his great idol, and he sometimes dares to compare himself with him. His Sonnets, indeed, have something of the same high-raised tone and prophetic spirit. Chaucer is another prime favourite of his, and he has been at the pains to modernize some of the Canterbury Tales. Those persons, who look upon Mr. Wordsworth as a merely puerile writer, must be rather at a loss to account for his strong predilection for such geniuses as Dante and Michael Angelo. We do not think our author has any very cordial sympathy with Shakespear. How should he? Shakespear was the least of an egotist of any body in the world. He does not much relish the variety and scope of dramatic composition. " He hates those interlocutions between Lucius and Caius." Yet Mr. Wordsworth himself wrote a tragedy when he was young; and we have heard the following energetic lines quoted from it, as put into the mouth of a person smit with remorse for some rash crime:

> ———" Action is momentary,
> The motion of a muscle this way or that;
> Suffering is long, obscure and infinite! "

Perhaps for want of light and shade, and the unshackled

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spirit of the drama, this performance was never brought forward. Our critic has a great dislike to Gray, and a fondness for Thomson and Collins. It is mortifying to hear him speak of Pope and Dryden whom, because they have been supposed to have all the possible excellences of poetry, he will allow to have none.

Nothing, however, can be fairer, or more amusing than the way in which he sometimes exposes the unmeaning verbiage of modern poetry. Thus, in the beginning of Dr. Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*—

> "Let observation with extensive view
> Survey mankind from China to Peru"—

he says there is a total want of imagination accompanying the words; the same idea is repeated three times under the disguise of a different phraseology. It comes to this: "let *observation* with extensive *observation observe* mankind;" or take away the first line, and the second,

> "Survey mankind from China to Peru,"

literally conveys the whole.[1] Mr. Wordsworth is, we must say, a perfect Drawcansir as to prose writers. He complains of the dry reasoners and matter-of-fact people for their want of *passion;* and he is jealous of the rhetorical declaimers and rhapsodists as trenching on the province of poetry. He condemns all French writers (as well of poetry as prose) in the lump. His list in this way is indeed small. He approves of Walton's Angler, Paley, and some other writers of an inoffensive modesty of pretension. He also likes books of voyages

[1] In the same way, there is Dryden's sonorous couplet in *Absalom and Achitophel*:—

> "Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
> *And narrow confines do their bounds divide,*"

which is a meaningless reduplication, a tautology of ideas.—Ed.

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and travels, and Robinson Crusoe. In art, he greatly esteems Bewick's woodcuts and Waterloo's sylvan etchings. But he sometimes takes a higher tone, and gives his mind fair play. We have known him enlarge with a noble intelligence and enthusiasm on Nicolas Poussin's fine landscape-compositions, pointing out the unity of design that pervades them, the superintending mind, the imaginative principle that brings all to bear on the same end; and declaring he would not give a rush for any landscape that did not express the time of day, the climate, the period of the world it was meant to illustrate, or had not this character of *wholeness* in it.

His eye also does justice to Rembrandt's fine and masterly effects. In the way in which that artist works something out of nothing, and transforms the stump of a tree, a common figure, into an *ideal* object by the gorgeous light and shade thrown upon it, he perceives an analogy to his own mode of investing the minute details of nature with an atmosphere of sentiment, and in pronouncing Rembrandt to be a man of genius, feels that he strengthens his own claim to the title. It has been said of Mr. Wordsworth, that "he hates conchology, that he hates the Venus of Medicis." But these, we hope, are mere epigrams and *jeux-d'esprit*, as far from truth as they are free from malice: a sort of running satire or critical clenches—

> "Where one for sense and one for rhyme
> Is quite sufficient at one time."

We think, however, that if Mr. Wordsworth had been a more liberal and candid critic, he would have been a more sterling writer. If a greater number of sources of pleasure had been open to him, he would have communicated pleasure to the world more frequently. Had he been less fastidious in pronouncing sentence on the works

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of others, his own would have been received more favourably, and treated more leniently. The current of his feelings is deep, but narrow; the range of his understanding is lofty and aspiring rather than discursive. The force, the originality, the absolute truth and identity, with which he feels some things, makes him indifferent to so many others. The simplicity and enthusiasm of his feelings, with respect to nature, render him bigoted and intolerant in his judgments of men and things. But it happens to him, as to others, that his strength lies in his weakness; and perhaps we have no right to complain. We might get rid of the cynic and the egotist, and find in his stead a common-place man. We should "take the good the Gods provide us:" a fine and original vein of poetry is not one of their most contemptible gifts; and the rest is scarcely worth thinking of, except as it may be a mortification to those who expect perfection from human nature, or who have been idle enough at some period of their lives to deify men of genius as possessing claims above it. But this is a chord that jars, and we shall not dwell upon it.

Lord Byron we have called, according to the old proverb, "the spoiled child of fortune:" Mr. Wordsworth might plead, in mitigation of some peculiarities, that he is "the spoiled child of disappointment." We are convinced, if he had been early a popular poet, he would have borne his honours meekly, and would have been a person of great *bonhommie* and frankness of disposition. But the sense of injustice and of undeserved ridicule sours the temper and narrows the views. To have produced works of genius, and to find them neglected or treated with scorn, is one of the heaviest trials of human patience. We exaggerate our own merits when they are denied by others, and are apt to grudge and cavil at every particle of praise bestowed on those

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to whom we feel a conscious superiority. In mere self-defence we turn against the world when it turns against us, brood over the undeserved slights we receive; and thus the genial current of the soul is stopped, or vents itself in effusions of petulance and self-conceit. Mr. Wordsworth has thought too much of contemporary critics and criticism, and less than he ought of the award of posterity and of the opinion, we do not say of private friends, but of those who were made so by their admiration of his genius.

He did not court popularity by a conformity to established models, and he ought not to have been surprised that his originality was not understood as a matter of course. He has *gnawed too much on the bridle*, and has often thrown out crusts to the critics, in mere defiance or as a point of honour when he was challenged, which otherwise his own good sense would have withheld. We suspect that Mr. Wordsworth's feelings are a little morbid in this respect, or that he resents censure more than he is gratified by praise. Otherwise, the tide has turned much in his favour of late years. He has a large body of determined partisans, and is at present sufficiently in request with the public to save or relieve him from the last necessity to which a man of genius can be reduced—that of becoming the God of his own idolatry!

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SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

THE subject of the present article is one of the ablest and most accomplished men of the age, both as a writer, a speaker, and a converser. He is, in fact, master of almost every known topic, whether of a passing or of a more recondite nature. He has lived much in society, and is deeply conversant with books. He is a man of the world and a scholar; but the scholar gives the tone to all his other acquirements and pursuits.

Sir James is by education and habit, and we were going to add, by the original turn of his mind, a college-man; and perhaps he would have passed his time most happily and respectably, had he devoted himself entirely to that kind of life. The strength of his faculties would have been best developed, his ambition would have met its proudest reward, in the accumulation and elaborate display of grave and useful knowledge. As it is, it may be said that in company he talks well, but too much; that in writing he overlays the original subject and spirit of the composition by an appeal to authorities and by too formal a method; that in public speaking the logician takes place of the orator, and that he fails to give effect to a particular point or to urge an immediate advantage home upon his adversary from the enlarged scope of his mind and the wide career he takes in the field of argument.

To consider him in the last point of view first. As a

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political partisan, he is rather the lecturer than the advocate. He is able to instruct and delight an impartial and disinterested audience by the extent of his information, by his acquaintance with general principles, by the clearness and aptitude of his illustrations, by vigour and copiousness of style; but where he has a prejudiced or unfair antagonist to contend with, he is just as likely to put weapons into his enemy's hands, as to wrest them from him; and his object seems to be rather to deserve than to obtain success. The characteristics of his mind are retentiveness and comprehension, with facility of production: but he is not equally remarkable for originality of view, or warmth of feeling, or liveliness of fancy.

His eloquence is a little rhetorical; his reasoning chiefly logical. He can bring down the account of knowledge on a vast variety of subjects to the present moment; he can embellish any cause he undertakes by the most approved and graceful ornaments: he can support it by a host of facts and examples, but he cannot advance it a step forward by placing it on a new and triumphant 'vantage-ground, nor can he overwhelm and break down the artificial fences and bulwarks of sophistry by the irresistible tide of manly enthusiasm. Sir James Mackintosh is an accomplished debater rather than a powerful orator: he is distinguished more as a man of wonderful and variable talent than as a man of commanding intellect. His mode of treating a question is critical, and not parliamentary. It has been formed in the closet and the schools, and is hardly fitted for scenes of active life or the collisions of party-spirit. Sir James reasons on the square; while the arguments of his opponents are loaded with iron or gold. He makes indeed a respectable ally, but not a very formidable opponent. He is as likely, however, to prevail on a

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neutral, as he is almost certain to be baffled on a hotly contested ground.

On any question of general policy or legislative improvement, the Member for Nairn is heard with advantage, and his speeches are attended with effect: and he would have equal weight and influence at other times, if it were the object of the House to hear reason, as it is his aim to speak it. But on subjects of peace or war, of political rights or foreign interference, where the waves of party run high, and the liberty of nations or the fate of mankind hangs trembling in the scales, though he probably displays equal talent, and does full and heaped justice to the question (abstractedly speaking, or if it were to be tried before an impartial assembly), yet we confess we have seldom heard him on such occasions without pain for the event. He did not slur his own character and pretensions; but he compromised the argument. He spoke *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;* but the House of Commons (we dare aver it) is not the place where the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth can be spoken with safety or with advantage. The judgment of the House is not a balance to weigh scruples and reasons to the turn of a fraction: another element, besides the love of truth, enters into the composition of their decisions, the reaction of which must be calculated upon and guarded against. If our philosophical statesman had to open the case before a class of tyros or a circle of grey-beards, who wished to form or to strengthen their judgments upon fair and rational grounds, nothing could be more satisfactory, more luminous, more able or more decisive than the view taken of it by Sir James Mackintosh.

But the House of Commons, as a collective body, have not the docility of youth, the calm wisdom of age, and often only want an excuse to do wrong, or to adhere

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to what they have already determined upon; and Sir James, in detailing the inexhaustible stores of his memory and reading, in unfolding the wide range of his theory and practice, in laying down the rules and the exceptions, in insisting upon the advantages and the objections with equal explicitness, would be sure to let something drop that a dexterous and watchful adversary would easily pick up and turn against him, if this were found necessary; or if with so many *pros* and *cons*, doubts and difficulties, dilemmas and alternatives thrown into it, the scale, with its natural bias to interest and power, did not already fly up and kick the beam. There wanted unity of purpose, impetuosity of feeling to break through the phalanx of hostile and inveterate prejudice arrayed against him.

He gave a handle to his enemies, threw stumbling-blocks in the way of his friends. He raised so many objections for the sake of answering them, proposed so many doubts for the sake of solving them, and made so many concessions where none were demanded, that his reasoning had the effect of neutralizing itself: it became a mere exercise of the understanding without zest or spirit left in it; and the provident engineer who was to shatter in pieces the strongholds of corruption and oppression by a well-directed and unsparing discharge of artillery, seemed to have brought not only his own cannon-balls, but his own wool-packs along with him to ward off the threatened mischief. This was a good deal the effect of his maiden speech on the transfer of Genoa, to which Lord Castlereagh did not deign an answer, and which another Honourable Member called "a *finical* speech." It was a most able, candid, closely argued, and philosophical exposure of that unprincipled transaction; but for this very reason it was a solecism in the place where it was delivered. Sir James has, since this period

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and with the help of practice, lowered himself to the tone of the House, and has also applied himself to questions more congenial to his habits of mind, and where the success would be more likely to be proportioned to his zeal and his exertions.

There was a greater degree of power, or of dashing and splendid effect (we wish we could add, an equally humane and liberal spirit) in the *Lectures on the Law of Nature and Nations*, formerly[1] delivered by Sir James (then Mr.) Mackintosh, in Lincoln's-Inn Hall. He showed greater confidence, was more at home there. The effect was more electrical and instantaneous, and this elicited a prouder display of intellectual riches and a more animated and imposing mode of delivery. He grew wanton with success. Dazzling others by the brilliancy of his acquirements, dazzled himself by the admiration they excited, he lost fear as well as prudence: dared everything, carried everything before him. The Modern Philosophy, counterscarp, outworks, citadel, and all, fell without a blow by "the whiff and wind of his fell *doctrine*," as if it had been a pack of cards. The volcano of the French Revolution was seen expiring in its own flames, like a bonfire made of straw: the principles of Reform were scattered in all directions, like chaff before the keen northern blast.

He laid about him like one inspired; nothing could withstand his envenomed tooth. Like some savage beast got into the garden of the fabled Hesperides, he made clear work of it, root and branch, with white, foaming tusks—

> "Laid waste the borders, and o'erthrew the bowers."

The havoc was amazing, the desolation was complete.

[1] In 1799. My great-uncle, Sir John Stoddart, attended these Lectures, and I have notes of one or two of them in his handwriting —I believe, unpublished elsewhere.—Ed.

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As to our visionary sceptics and Utopian philosophers, they stood no chance with our lecturer. He did not "carve them as a dish fit for the Gods, but hewed them as a carcase fit for hounds." Poor Godwin, who had come, in the *bonhomie* and candour of his nature, to hear what new light had broken in upon his old friend, was obliged to quit the field, and slank away after an exulting taunt thrown out at "such fanciful chimeras as a golden mountain or a perfect man."

Mackintosh had something of the air, much of the dexterity and self-possession, of a political and philosophical juggler; and an eager and admiring audience gaped and greedily swallowed the gilded bait of sophistry, prepared for their credulity and wonder. Those of us who attended day after day, and were accustomed to have all our previous notions confounded and struck out of our hands by some metaphysical legerdemain, were at last at some loss to know *whether two and two made four*, till we had heard the lecturer's opinion on that head. He might have some mental reservation on the subject, some pointed ridicule to pour upon the common supposition, some learned authority to quote against it. To anticipate the line of argument he might pursue, was evidently presumptuous and premature. One thing only appeared certain that, whatever opinion he chose to take up, he was able to make good either by the foils or the cudgels, by gross banter or nice distinctions, by a well-timed mixture of paradox and common-place, by an appeal to vulgar prejudices or startling scepticism. It seemed to be equally his object, or the tendency of his Discourses, to unsettle every principle of reason or of common sense, and to leave his audience at the mercy of the *dictum* of a lawyer, the nod of a minister, or the shout of a mob.

To effect this purpose, he drew largely on the learn-

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ing of antiquity, on modern literature, on history, poetry and the belles-lettres, on the Schoolmen and on writers of novels, French, English, and Italian. In mixing up the sparkling julep, that by its potent operation was to scour away the dregs and feculence and peccant humours of the body politic, he seemed to stand with his back to the drawers in a metaphysical dispensary, and to take out of them whatever ingredient suited his purpose. In this way he had an antidote for every error, an answer to every folly. The writings of Burke, Hume, Berkeley, Paley, Bacon, Jeremy Taylor, Grotius, Puffendorf, Cicero, Aristotle, Tacitus, Livy, Sully, Machiavel, Guicciardini, Thuanus, lay open beside him, and he could instantly lay his hand upon the passage, and quote them chapter and verse to the clearing up of all difficulties and the silencing of all oppugners.

Mackintosh's Lectures were after all but a kind of philosophical centos. They were profound, brilliant, new to his hearers; but the profundity, the brilliancy, the novelty were not his own. He was like Dr. Pangloss (not Voltaire's, but Colman's) who speaks only in quotations; and the pith, the marrow of Sir James's reasoning and rhetoric at that memorable period might be put within inverted commas. It, however, served its purpose, and the loud echo died away. We remember an excellent man and a sound critic[1] going to hear one of these elaborate effusions; and on his want of enthusiasm being accounted for from its not being one of the orator's brilliant days, he replied, "he did not think a man of genius could speak for two hours without saying something by which he would have been electrified." We are only sorry, at this distance of time, for one thing in these Lectures—the tone and spirit in which they seemed

[1] The late Rev. Joseph Fawcett, of Walthamstow. [See *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, i., 75.]

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to have been composed and to be delivered. If all that body of opinions and principles of which the orator read his recantation was unfounded, and there was an end of all those views and hopes that pointed to future improvement, it was not a matter of triumph or exultation to the lecturer or any body else, to the young or the old, the wise or the foolish; on the contrary, it was a subject of regret, of slow, reluctant, painful admission—

"Of lamentation loud heard on the rueful stream."

The immediate occasion of this sudden and violent change in Sir James's views and opinions was attributed to a personal interview which he had had a little before his death with Mr. Burke, at his house at Beaconsfield. In the latter end of the year 1796, appeared the *Regicide Peace*, from the pen of the great apostate from liberty and betrayer of his species into the hands of those who claimed it as their property by divine right: a work imposing, solid in many respects, abounding in facts and admirable reasoning, and in which all flashy ornaments were laid aside for a testamentary gravity (the eloquence of despair resembling the throes and heaving, and muttered threats, of an earthquake rather than the loud thunderbolt); and soon after came out a criticism on it in *The Monthly Review*, doing justice to the author and the style, and combating the inferences with force and at much length, but with candour and with respect, amounting to deference.

It was new to Mr. Burke not to be called names by persons of the opposite party; it was an additional triumph to him to be spoken well of, to be loaded with well-earned praise by the author of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*. It was a testimony from an old, a powerful, and an admired antagonist.[1] He sent an invitation to the writer

[1] At the time [1791] when the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* first made its ap-

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to come and see him; and in the course of three days' animated discussion of such subjects Mackintosh became a convert not merely to the graces and gravity of Mr. Burke's style, but to the liberality of his views and the solidity of his opinions.

The Lincoln's-Inn Lectures were the fruit of this interview: such is the influence exercised by men of genius and imaginative power over those who have nothing to oppose to their unforeseen flashes of thought and invention but the dry, cold, formal deductions of the understanding. Our politician had time, during a few years of absence from his native country,[1] and while the din of war and the cries of party spirit "were lost over a wide and unhearing ocean," to recover from his surprise and from a temporary alienation of mind, and to return in spirit, and in the mild and mellowed maturity of age, to the principles and attachments of his early life.

The appointment of Sir James Mackintosh to a Judgeship in India was one which, however flattering to his vanity or favourable to his interests, was entirely foreign to his feelings and habits. It was an honourable exile. He was out of his element among black slaves and sepoys, and Nabobs and cadets, and writers to India. He had no one to exchange ideas with. The "unbought grace of life," the charm of literary conversation, was gone. It was the habit of his mind, his ruling passion, to enter into the shock and conflict of opinions on philosophical, political and critical questions: not to dictate to raw

pearance, as a reply to the *Reflections on the French Revolution*, it was cried up by the partisans of the new school as a work superior in the charms of composition to its redoubted rival: in acuteness, depth, and soundness of reasoning of course there was supposed to be no comparison.

[1] In India, where he remained several years in a judicial capacity. —Ed.

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tyros or domineer over persons in subordinate situations, but to obtain the guerdon and the laurels of superior sense and information by meeting with men of equal standing: to have a fair field pitched: to argue, to distinguish, to reply: to hunt down the game of intellect with eagerness and skill—to push an advantage, to cover a retreat, to give and take a fall—

"And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."[1]

It is no wonder that this sort of friendly intellectual gladiatorship is Sir James's greatest pleasure, for it is his peculiar *forte*. He has not many equals, and scarcely any superior, in it. He is too indolent for an author, too unimpassioned for an orator; but in society he is just vain enough to be pleased with immediate attention, good-humoured enough to listen with patience to others, with great coolness and self-possession, fluent, communicative, and with a manner equally free from violence and insipidity. Few subjects can be started, on which he is not qualified to appear to advantage as the gentleman and scholar. If there is some tinge of pedantry, it is carried off by great affability of address and variety of amusing and interesting topics. There is scarce an author that he has not read, a period of history that he is not conversant with, a celebrated name of which he has not a number of anecdotes to relate, an intricate question that he is not prepared to enter upon in a popular or scientific manner. If an opinion in an abstruse metaphysical author is referred to, he is probably able to repeat the passage by heart, can tell the side of the page on which it is to be met with, can trace it back through various descents to Locke, Hobbes, Lord Herbert of Cherbury: to a place in some obscure folio of the School-men or a note in one of the commentators on

[1] The Scholar in Chaucer.—Ed.

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Aristotle or Plato, and thus give you in a few moments' space, and without any effort or previous notice, a chronological table of the progress of the human mind in that particular branch of inquiry.

There is something, we think, perfectly admirable and delightful in an exhibition of this kind, and which is equally creditable to the speaker and gratifying to the hearer. But this kind of talent was of no use in India: the intellectual wares, of which the Chief Judge [1] delighted to make a display, were in no request there. He languished after the friends and the society he had left behind, and wrote over incessantly for books from England. One that was sent him at this time was an *Essay on the Principles of Human Action*;[2] and the way in which he spoke of that dry, tough, metaphysical *choke-pear*, showed the dearth of intellectual intercourse in which he lived, and the craving in his mind after those studies which had once been his pride, and to which he still turned for consolation in his remote solitude.

Perhaps to another, the novelty of the scene, the differences of mind and manners might have atoned for a want of social and literary *agrémens:* but Sir James is one of those who see nature through the spectacles of books. He might like to read an account of India; but India itself with its burning, shining face would be a mere blank, an endless waste to him. To persons of this class of mind things must be translated into words, visible images into abstract propositions, to meet their refined apprehensions; and they have no more to say to a matter-of-fact staring them in the face without a label in its mouth, than they would to a hippopotamus.

[1] He was Judge of the Admiralty Court.—Ed.

[2] By Hazlitt. It was printed during the absence of Mackintosh in India—that is, in 1805.—Ed.

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We may add, before we quit this point, that we cannot conceive of any two persons more different in colloquial talents, in which they both excel, than Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Coleridge. They have nearly an equal range of reading and of topics of conversation: but in the mind of the one we see nothing but *fixtures;* in the other every thing is fluid. The ideas of the one are as formal and tangible, as those of the other are shadowy and evanescent. Sir James Mackintosh walks over the ground; Mr. Coleridge is always flying off from it. The first knows all that has been said upon a subject; the last has something to say that was never said before. If the one deals too much in learned *common-places*, the other teems with idle fancies. The one has a good deal of the *caput mortuum* of genius; the other is all volatile salt. The conversation of Sir James Mackintosh has the effect of reading a well-written book; that of his friend is like hearing a bewildered dream. The one is an Encyclopedia of knowledge; the other is a succession of *Sybilline Leaves!*

As an author, Sir James Mackintosh may claim the foremost rank among those who pride themselves on artificial ornaments and acquired learning, or who write what may be termed a *composite* style. His *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* is a work of great labour, great ingenuity, great brilliancy, and great vigour. It is a little too antithetical in the structure of its periods, too dogmatical in the announcement of its opinions. Sir James has, we believe, rejected something of the *false brilliant* of the one, as he has retracted some of the abrupt extravagance of the other. We apprehend, however, that our author is not one of those who draw from their own resources and accumulated feelings, or who improve with age. He belongs to a class (common in Scotland and elsewhere) who get up school-exercises on any given subject in a

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masterly manner at twenty, and who at forty are either where they were—or retrograde, if they are men of sense and modesty. The reason is, their vanity is weaned, after the first hey-day and animal spirits of youth are flown, from making an affected display of knowledge which, however useful, is not their own, and may be much more simply stated. They are tired of repeating the same arguments over and over again, after having exhausted and rung the changes on their whole stock for a number of times. Sir James Mackintosh is understood to be a writer in the Edinburgh Review; and the articles attributed to him there are full of matter of great pith and moment. But they want the trim pointed expression, the ambitious ornaments, the ostentatious display and rapid volubility of his early productions.

We have heard it objected to his later compositions, that his style is good as far as single words and phrases are concerned, but that his sentences are clumsy and disjointed, and that these make up still more awkward and sprawling paragraphs. This is a nice criticism, and we cannot speak to its truth; but if the fact be so, we think we can account for it from the texture and obvious process of the author's mind. All his ideas may be said to be given preconceptions. They do not arise, as it were, out of the subject, or out of one another at the moment, and therefore do not flow naturally and gracefully from one another. They have been laid down beforehand in a sort of formal division or frame-work of the understanding; and the connexion between the premises and the conclusion, between one branch of a subject and another, is made out in a bungling and unsatisfactory manner. There is no principle of fusion in the work; he strikes after the iron is cold, and there is a want of malleability in the style. Sir James is at

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present said to be engaged in writing a *History of England* after the downfall of the house of Stuart.[1] May it be worthy of the talents of the author, and of the principles of the period it is intended to illustrate!

[1] Mackintosh did not complete it; but as much as he left behind him in MS. was published after his death.—Ed.

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MR. MALTHUS.

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MR. MALTHUS.[1]

MR. MALTHUS may be considered as one of those rare and fortunate writers who have attained a *scientific* reputation in questions of moral and political philosophy. His name undoubtedly stands very high in the present age, and will in all probability go down to posterity with more or less of renown or obloquy. It was said by a person well qualified to judge both from strength and candour of mind, that "it would take a thousand years at least to answer his work on Population." He has certainly thrown a new light on that question, and changed the aspect of political economy in a decided and material point of view; whether he has not also endeavoured to spread a gloom over the hopes and more sanguine speculations of man, and to cast a slur upon the face of nature, is another question.

There is this to be said for Mr. Malthus that, in speaking of him, one knows what one is talking about. He is something beyond a mere name; one has not to *beat the bush* about his talents, his attainments, his vast re-

[1] Malthus published his celebrated work on the Principle of Population in 1798. Hazlitt replied to it in 1807 in a volume, portions of which had been originally contributed to Cobbett's *Political Register;* and works on the same side followed in 1810 and 1812 from the pens of Godwin and Place. Moreover, in 1815, Ricardo, at the end of his Essay on the Price of Corn, introduced some remarks on the writings of Malthus. Compare the papers inserted on this subject in Hazlitt's *Political Essays*, 1819.—ED.

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putation, and leave off without knowing what it all amounts to. He is not one of those great men, who set themselves off, and strut and fret an hour upon the stage, during a day-dream of popularity, with the ornaments and jewels borrowed from the common stock, to which nothing but their vanity and presumption gives them the least individual claim; he has dug into the mine of truth, and brought up ore mixed with dross!

In weighing his merits we come at once to the question of what he has done or failed to do. It is a specific claim that he sets up. When we speak of Mr. Malthus, we mean the *Essay on Population;* and when we mention the Essay on Population, we mean a distinct leading proposition, that stands out intelligibly from all trashy pretence, and is a ground on which to fix the levers that may move the world backwards or forwards. He has not left opinion where he found it; he has advanced or given it a wrong bias, or thrown a stumbling-block in its way. In a word, his name is not stuck, like so many others, in the firmament of reputation, nobody knows why, inscribed in great letters, and with a transparency of TALENTS, GENIUS, LEARNING blazing round it. It is tantamount to an idea; it is identified with a principle; it means that *the population cannot go on perpetually increasing without pressing on the limits of the means of subsistence, and that a check of some kind or other must, sooner or later, be opposed to it.* This is the essence of the doctrine which Mr. Malthus has been the first to bring into general notice, and, as we think, to establish beyond the fear of contradiction.[1]

Admitting then as we do the prominence and the

[1] This question has of late years revived, and there can be no doubt that the *Fruits of Philosophy*, though decried at the time of its appearance, is a work which at least shewed, and continues to shew, the bias of thought in this direction.—ED.

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value of his claims to public attention, it yet remains a question, how far those claims are (as to the talent displayed in them) strictly original; how far (as to the logical accuracy with which he has treated the subject) he has introduced foreign and doubtful matter into it; and how far (as to the spirit in which he has conducted his inquiries, and applied a general principle to particular objects) he has only drawn fair and inevitable conclusions from it, or endeavoured to tamper with and wrest it to sinister and servile purposes. A writer, who shrinks from following up a well-founded principle into its untoward consequences from timidity or false delicacy, is not worthy of the name of a philosopher: a writer who assumes the garb of candour and an inflexible love of truth to garble and pervert it, to crouch to power and pander to prejudice, deserves a worse title than that of a sophist.

Mr. Malthus's first octavo volume on this subject (published in the year 1798) was intended as an answer to Mr. Godwin's *Enquiry concerning Political Justice.* It was well got up for the purpose, and had an immediate effect. It was what in the language of the ring is called *a facer.* It made Mr. Godwin and the other advocates of Modern Philosophy look about them. It may be almost doubted whether Mr. Malthus was in the first instance serious in many things that he threw out, or whether he did not hazard the whole as an amusing and extreme paradox, which might puzzle the reader as it had done himself in an idle moment, but to which no practical consequence whatever could attach. This state of mind would probably continue, till the irritation of enemies and the encouragement of friends convinced him that what he had at first exhibited as an idle fancy was in fact a very valuable discovery, or "like the toad ugly and venomous, had yet a precious jewel in its

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head." Such a supposition would at least account for some things in the original Essay, which scarcely any writer would venture upon, except as professed exercises of ingenuity, and which have been since in part retracted. But a wrong bias was thus given, and the author's theory was thus rendered warped, disjointed, and sophistical from the very outset.

Nothing could in fact be more illogical (not to say absurd) than the whole of Mr. Malthus's reasoning applied as an answer *(par excellence)* to Mr. Godwin's book, or to the theories of other Utopian philosophers. Mr. Godwin was not singular, but was kept in countenance by many authorities, both ancient and modern, in supposing a state of society possible in which the passions and wills of individuals would be conformed to the general good, in which the knowledge of the best means of promoting human welfare and the desire of contributing to it would banish vice and misery from the world, and in which, the stumbling-blocks of ignorance, of selfishness, and the indulgence of gross appetite being removed, all things would move on by the mere impulse of wisdom and virtue to still higher and higher degrees of perfection and happiness.

Compared with the lamentable and gross deficiencies of existing institutions, such a view of futurity as barely possible could not fail to allure the gaze and tempt the aspiring thoughts of the philanthropist and the philosopher; the hopes and the imaginations of speculative men could not but rush forward into this ideal world as into a *vacuum* of good; and from "the mighty stream of tendency" (as Mr. Wordsworth in the cant of the day calls it,) there was danger that the proud monuments of time-hallowed institutions, that the strong-holds of power and corruption, that "the Corinthian capitals of polished society," with the base and pediments, might

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be overthrown and swept away as by a hurricane. There were not wanting persons whose ignorance, whose fears, whose pride, or whose prejudices contemplated such an alternative with horror, and who would naturally feel no small obligation to the man, who should relieve their apprehensions from the stunning roar of this mighty change of opinion that thundered at a distance, and should be able, by some logical apparatus or unexpected turn of the argument, to prevent the vessel of the state from being hurried forward with the progress of improvement, and dashed in pieces down the tremendous precipice of human perfectibility.

Then comes Mr. Malthus forward with the geometrical and arithmetical ratios in his hands, and holds them out to his affrighted contemporaries as the only means of salvation. "For" (so argued the author of the Essay) "let the principles of Mr. Godwin's Enquiry and of other similar works be carried literally and completely into effect; let every corruption and abuse of power be entirely got rid of; let virtue, knowledge and civilization be advanced to the greatest height that these visionary reformers would suppose; let the passions and appetites be subjected to the utmost control of reason and influence of public opinion: grant them, in a word, all that they ask, and the more completely their views are realized, the sooner will they be overthrown again, and the more inevitable and fatal will be the catastrophe. For the principle of population will still prevail, and from the comfort, ease and plenty that will abound, will receive an increasing force and *impetus*. The number of mouths to be fed will have no limit; but the food that is to supply them cannot keep pace with the demand for it; we must come to a stop somewhere, even though each square yard, by extreme improvements in cultivation, could maintain its man. In this state of

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things there will be no remedy; the wholesome checks of vice and misery (which have hitherto kept this principle within bounds) will have been done away; the voice of reason will be unheard; the passions only will bear sway; famine, distress, havoc and dismay will spread around; hatred, violence, war and bloodshed will be the infallible consequence; and from the pinnacle of happiness, peace, refinement and social advantage we shall be hurled once more into a profounder abyss of misery, want, and barbarism than ever by the sole operation of the principle of population!"

Such is a brief abstract of the argument of the Essay. Can any thing be less conclusive, a more complete fallacy and *petitio principii?* Mr. Malthus concedes, he assumes, a state of perfectibility such as his opponents imagine, in which the general good is to obtain the entire mastery of individual interests, and reason of gross appetites and passions: and then he argues that such a perfect structure of society will fall by its own weight, or rather be undermined by the principle of population, because in the highest possible state of the subjugation of the passions to reason this will be absolutely lawless and unchecked, and because, as men become enlightened, quick-sighted and public spirited, they will show themselves utterly blind to the consequences of their actions, utterly indifferent to their own well-being and that of all succeeding generations, whose fate is placed in their hands.

This we conceive to be the boldest paralogism that ever was offered to the world, or palmed upon willing credulity. Against whatever other scheme of reform this objection might be valid, the one it was brought expressly to overturn was impregnable against it, invulnerable to its slightest graze. Say that the Utopian reasoners are visionaries unfounded, that the state of

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virtue and knowledge they suppose, in which reason shall have become all-in-all, can never take place, that it is inconsistent with the nature of man and with all experience, well and good—but to say that society will have attained this high and palmy state, that reason will have become the master-key to all our motives, and that, when arrived at its greatest power, it will cease to act at all, but will fall down dead, inert and senseless before the principle of population, is an opinion which one would think few people would choose to advance or assent to without strong inducements for maintaining or believing it.

The fact, however, is, that Mr. Malthus found this argument entire (the principle and the application of it) in an obscure and almost forgotten work published about the middle of the last century, entitled *Various Prospects of Mankind, Nature, and Providence*, by a Scotch gentleman of the name of Wallace.[1] The chapter in this work on the Principle of Population, considered as a bar to all ultimate views of human improvement, was probably written to amuse an idle hour, or read as a paper to exercise the wits of some literary society in the Northern capital, and no farther responsibility or importance annexed to it.[2] Mr. Malthus, by adopting and setting his name to it, has given it sufficient currency and effect. It sometimes happens that one writer is the

[1] In 1753 Dr. Robert Wallace published *A Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind in Ancient and Modern Times*, and followed it up in 1761 by the work named in the text. Of the latter there is a long and excellent account in the *Retrospective Review*, 1820, ii., 185, *et seqq.*—Ed.

[2] The author was not aware that Wallace also wrote the *Dissertation on the Numbers of Mankind*, 1753 and 1809, and a third work, entitled *Characteristics of the present state of Great Britain*, 8vo, 1758.—Ed.

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first to discover a certain principle or lay down a given observation, and that another makes an application of, or draws a remote or an immediate inference from it, totally unforeseen by the first, and from which, in all probability, he might have widely dissented.

But this is not so in the present instance. Mr. Malthus has borrowed (perhaps without consciousness, at any rate without acknowledgment) both the preliminary statement, that the increase in the supply of food "from a limited earth and a limited fertility" must have an end, while the tendency to increase in the principle of population has none, without some external and forcible restraint on it, and the subsequent use made of this statement as an insuperable bar to all schemes of Utopian or progressive improvement—both these he has borrowed (whole) from Wallace with all their imperfections on their heads, and has added more and greater ones to them out of his own store. In order to produce something of a startling and dramatic effect, he has strained a point or two. In order to quell and frighten away the bugbear of Modern Philosophy, he was obliged to make a sort of monster of the principle of population, which was brought into the field against it, and which was to swallow it up quick. No half-measures, no middle course of reasoning would do. With a view to meet the highest possible power of reason in the new order of things, Mr. Malthus saw the necessity of giving the greatest possible physical weight to the antagonist principle, and he accordingly lays it down that its operation is mechanical and irresistible. He premises these two propositions as the basis of all his reasoning, 1. *That food is necessary to man;* 2. *That the desire to propagate the species is an equally indispensable law of our existence:*—thus making it appear that these two wants or impulses are equal and coordinate principles of action. If this double

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statement had been true, the whole scope and structure of his reasoning (as hostile to human hopes and sanguine speculations) would have been irrefragable; but as it is not true, the whole (in that view) falls to the ground. According to Mr Malthus's octavo edition, the sexual passion is as necessary to be gratified as the appetite of hunger, and a man can no more exist without propagating his species than he can live without eating. Were it so, neither of these passions would admit of any excuses, any delay, any restraint from reason or foresight; and the only checks to the principle of population must be vice and misery. The argument would be triumphant and complete.

But there is no analogy, no parity in the two cases, such as our author here assumes. No man can live for any length of time without food; many persons live all their lives without gratifying the other sense. The longer the craving after food is unsatisfied, the more violent, imperious, and uncontrollable the desire becomes; whereas the longer the gratification of the sexual passion is resisted, the greater force does habit and resolution acquire over it; and, generally speaking, it is a well-known fact, attested by all observation and history, that this latter passion is subject more or less to control from personal feelings and character, from public opinion and the institutions of society, so as to lead either to a lawful and regulated indulgence, or to partial or total abstinence, according to the dictates of *moral restraint*, which latter check to the inordinate excesses and unheard-of consequences of the principle of population our author, having no longer an extreme case to make out, admits and is willing to patronize in addition to the two former and exclusive ones of *vice* and *misery*, in the second and remaining editions of his work.

Mr. Malthus has shown some awkwardness or even

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reluctance in softening down the harshness of his first peremptory decision. He sometimes grants his grand exception cordially, proceeds to argue stoutly, and to try conclusions upon it; at other times he seems disposed to cavil about or retract it:—"the influence of moral restraint is very inconsiderable, or none at all." It is indeed difficult (more particularly for so formal and nice a reasoner as Mr. Malthus) to piece such contradictions plausibly or gracefully together. We wonder how *he* manages it—how *any one* should attempt it! The whole question, the *gist* of the argument of his early volume turned upon this, "Whether vice and misery were the *only* actual or possible checks to the principle of population?" He then said they were, and farewell to building castles in the air! he now says that *moral restraint* is to be coupled with these, and that its influence depends greatly on the state of laws and manners; and Utopia stands where it did, a great way off indeed, but not turned *topsy-turvy* by our magician's wand! Should we ever arrive there, that is, attain to a state of *perfect moral restraint*, we shall not be driven headlong back into Epicurus's stye for want of the only possible checks to population, *vice* and *misery;* and in proportion as we advance that way, that is, as the influence of moral restraint is extended, the necessity for vice and misery will be diminished, instead of being increased according to the first alarm given by the Essay.

Again, the advance of civilization and of population in consequence with the same degree of moral restraint (as there exists in England at this present time, for instance) is a good, and not an evil; but this does not appear from the Essay. The Essay shows that population is not (as had been sometimes taken for granted) an abstract and unqualified good; but it led many persons to suppose that it was an abstract and unqualified

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evil, to be checked only by vice and misery; and producing, according to its encouragment, a greater quantity of vice and misery; and this error the author has not been at sufficient pains to do away. Another thing, in which Mr. Malthus attempted to *clench* Wallace's argument, was in giving to the disproportionate power of increase in the principle of population and the supply of food a mathematical form, or reducing it to the arithmetical and geometrical ratios, in which we believe Mr. Malthus is now generally admitted, even by his friends and admirers, to have been wrong. There is evidently no inherent difference in the principle of increase in food or population; since a grain of corn, for example, will propagate and multiply itself much faster even than the human species. A bushel of wheat will sow a field; that field will furnish seed for twenty others. So that the limit to the means of subsistence is only the want of room to raise it in, or, as Wallace expresses it, "a limited fertility and a limited earth."

Up to the point where the earth or any given country is fully occupied or cultivated, the means of subsistence naturally increase in a geometrical ratio, and will more than keep pace with the natural and unrestrained progress of population; and beyond that point they do not go on increasing even in Mr. Malthus's arithmetical ratio, but are stationary or nearly so. So far, then, is this proportion from being universally and mathematically true, that in no part of the world or state of society does it hold good. But our theorist, by laying down this double ratio as a law of nature, gains this advantage, that at all times it seems as if, whether in new or old-peopled countries, in fertile or barren soils, the population was pressing hard on the means of subsistence; and, again, it seems as if the evil increased with the progress of improvement and civilization. For if you

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cast your eye at the scale which is supposed to be calculated upon true and infallible *data*, you find that when the population is at 8, the means of subsistence are at 4; so that here there is only a *deficit* of one-half; but when it is at 32, they have only got to 6, so that here there is a difference of 26 in 32, and so on in proportion.

The farther we proceed, the more enormous is the mass of vice and misery we must undergo, as a consequence of the natural excess of the population over the means of subsistence and as a salutary check to its farther desolating progress. The mathematical Table, placed at the front of the Essay, therefore leads to a secret suspicion or a barefaced assumption, that we ought in mere kindness and compassion to give every sort of indirect and under-hand encouragement (to say the least) to the providential checks of vice and misery; as the sooner we arrest the formidable and paramount evil in its course, the less opportunity we leave it of doing incalculable mischief. Accordingly, whenever there is the least talk of colonizing new countries, of extending the population, or adding to social comforts and improvements, Mr. Malthus conjures up his double ratios, and insists on the alarming results of advancing them a single step forward in the series. By the same rule, it would be better to return at once to a state of barbarism, and to take the benefit of acorns and scuttle-fish as a security against the luxuries and wants of civilized life. But it is not our ingenious author's wish to hint at or recommend any alterations in existing institutions; and he is therefore silent on that unpalatable part of the subject and natural inference from his principles.

Mr. Malthus's "gospel is preached to the poor." He lectures them on economy, on morality, the regulation of their passions (which, he says at other times, are

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amenable to no restraint), and on the ungracious topic, that "the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, have doomed them and their families to starve for want of a right to the smallest portion of food beyond what their labour will supply, or some charitable hand may hold out in compassion." This is illiberal, and it is not philosophical. The laws of nature or of God, to which the author appeals, are no other than a limited fertility and a limited earth. Within those bounds the rest is regulated by the laws of man. The division of the produce of the soil, the price of labour, the relief afforded to the poor, are matters of human arrangement: while any charitable hand can extend relief, it is a proof that the means of subsistence are not exhausted in themselves, that "the tables are not full!" Mr. Malthus says that the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, have rendered that relief physically impossible; and yet he would abrogate the poor-laws by an act of the legislature, in order to take away that *impossible* relief, which the laws of God deny, and which the laws of man *actually* afford. We cannot think that this view of his subject, which is prominent and dwelt on at great length and with great pertinacity, is dictated either by rigid logic or melting charity! A labouring man is not allowed to knock down a hare or a partridge that spoils his garden: a country-squire keeps a pack of hounds: a lady of quality rides out with a footman behind her on two sleek, well-fed horses.

We have not a word to say against all this as exemplifying the spirit of the English Constitution, as a part of the law of the land, or as an artful distribution of light and shade in the social picture; but if any one insists at the same time that "the laws of nature, which are the laws of God, have doomed the poor and their families to starve," because the principle of population has en-

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croached upon and swallowed up the means of subsistence, so that not a mouthful of food is left *by the grinding law of necessity* for the poor, we beg leave to deny both fact and inference; and we put it to Mr. Malthus whether we are not, in strictness, justified in doing so?

We have, perhaps, said enough to explain our feeling on the subject of Mr. Malthus's merits and defects. We think he had the opportunity and the means in his hands of producing a great work on the principle of population; but we believe he has let it slip from his having an eye to other things besides that broad and unexplored question. He wished not merely to advance to the discovery of certain great and valuable truths, but at the same time to overthrow certain unfashionable paradoxes by exaggerated statements—to curry favour with existing prejudices and interests by garbled representations. He has, in a word, as it appears to us on a candid retrospect and without any feelings of controversial asperity rankling in our minds, sunk the philosopher and the friend of his species (a character to which he might have aspired) in the sophist and party-writer. The period at which Mr. Malthus came forward teemed with answers to Modern Philosophy, with antidotes to liberty and humanity, with abusive Histories of the Greek and Roman republics, with fulsome panegyrics on the Roman Emperors (at the very time when we were reviling Buonaparte for his strides to universal empire) with the slime and offal of desperate servility; and we cannot but consider the Essay as one of the poisonous ingredients thrown into the cauldron of Legitimacy "to make it thick and slab." Our author has indeed so far done service to the cause of truth, that he has counteracted many capital errors formerly prevailing as to the universal and indiscriminate encouragement of population under all circumstances; but he has

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countenanced opposite errors which, if adopted in theory and practice, would be even more mischievous, and has left it to future philosophers to follow up the principle, that some check must be provided for the unrestrained progress of population, into a set of wiser and more humane consequences. Mr. Godwin has lately attempted an answer to the Essay (thus giving Mr. Malthus a *Roland for his Oliver*) but we think he has judged ill in endeavouring to invalidate the principle, instead of confining himself to point out the misapplication of it. There is one argument introduced in this Reply, which will, perhaps, amuse the reader as a sort of metaphysical puzzle.

"It has sometimes occurred to me whether Mr. Malthus did not catch the first hint of his geometrical ratio from a curious passage of Judge Blackstone on consanguinity, which is as follows:—

"'The doctrine of lineal consanguinity is sufficiently plain and obvious; but it is at the first view astonishing to consider the number of lineal ancestors which every man has within no very great number of degrees; and so many different bloods is a man said to contain in his veins, as he hath lineal ancestors. Of these he hath two in the first ascending degree, his own parents; he hath four in the second, the parents of his father and the parents of his mother; he hath eight in the third, the parents of his two grandfathers and two grandmothers; and by the same rule of progression, he hath an hundred and twenty-eight in the seventh: a thousand and twenty-four in the tenth; and at the twentieth degree, or the distance of twenty generations, every man hath above a million of ancestors, as common arithmetic will demonstrate.

"This will seem surprising to those who are unacquainted with the increasing power of progressive num-

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bers; but it is palpably evident from the following table of a geometrical progression, in which the first term is 2, and the denominator also 2; or, to speak more intelligibly, it is evident, that each of us has two ancestors in the first degree, the number of which is doubled at every remove, because each of our ancestors had also two ancestors of his own.

Lineal Degrees.	*Number of Ancestors.*
1	2
2	4
3	8
4	16
5	32
6	64
7	128
8	256
9	512
10	1024
11	2048
12	4096
13	8192
14	16,384
15	32,768
16	65,536
17	131,072
18	262,144
19	524,288
20	1,048,576'

"This argument, however," (proceeds Mr. Godwin) "from Judge Blackstone of a geometrical progression would much more naturally apply to Montesquieu's hypothesis of the depopulation of the world, and prove that the human species is hastening fast to extinction, than to the purpose for which Mr. Malthus has employed it. An ingenious sophism—on the supposition that a man can have no brother or sister, but that every pair can only have one offspring—might be raised upon it, to show that the race of mankind will ultimately termi-

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nate in unity. Mr. Malthus, indeed, should have reflected, that it is much more certain that every man has had ancestors than that he will have posterity, and that it is still more doubtful, whether he will have posterity to twenty or to an indefinite number of generations."[1]

Mr. Malthus's style is correct and elegant, his tone of controversy mild and gentlemanly; and the care, with which he has brought his facts and documents together, deserves the highest praise. He has lately quitted his favourite subject of population, and broken a lance with Mr. Ricardo on the question of rent and value. The partisans of Mr. Ricardo, who are also the admirers of Mr. Malthus, say that the usual sagacity of the latter has here failed him, and that he has shown himself to be a very illogical writer. To have said this of him formerly on another ground, was accounted a heresy and a piece of presumption not easily to be forgiven. Indeed Mr. Malthus has always been a sort of "darling in the public eye," whom it was unsafe to meddle with. He has contrived to make himself as many friends by his attacks on the schemes of *Human Perfectibility* and on the *Poor-Laws*, as Mandeville formerly procured enemies by his attacks on *Human Perfections* and on *Charity-Schools;* and among other instances that we might mention, *Plug* Pulteney, the celebrated miser, of whom Mr. Burke said on his having a large estate left him, "that now it was to be hoped he would *set up a pocket-handkerchief*," was so enamoured with the saving schemes and humane economy of the Essay, that he desired a friend to find out the author and offer him a church living! This liberal intention was (by design or accident) unhappily frustrated.

[1] Enquiry concerning Population, p. 100.

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THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE CANNING.

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THE RIGHT HON. GEORGE CANNING.

MR. CANNING was the cleverest boy at Eton: he is, perhaps, the cleverest man in the House of Commons. It is, however, in the sense in which, according to Mr. Wordsworth, "the child is father to the man." He has grown up entirely out of what he then was. He has merely engrafted a set of Parliamentary phrases and the technicalities of debate on the themes and school-exercises he was set to compose when a boy. Nor has he ever escaped from the trammels imposed on youthful genius; he has never assumed a manly independence of mind. He has been all his life in the habit of getting up a speech at the nod of a Minister, as he used to get up a thesis under the direction of his schoolmaster. The matter is nothing; the only question is, how he shall express himself. The consequence has been as might be expected. Not being at liberty to choose his own side of the question, nor to look abroad into the world for original (but perhaps unwelcome) observations, nor to follow up a strict chain of reasoning into its unavoidable consequences, the whole force of his mind has been exhausted in an attention to the ornaments of style and to an agreeable and imposing selection of topics. It is his business and his inclination to embellish what is trite, to gloss over what is true, to vamp up some feeble sophism, to spread the colours of a meretricious fancy over the unexpected exposure of some dark intrigue, some glaring iniquity—

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"Like as the sun-burnt Indians do array
Their tawny bodies in their proudest plight
With painted plumes in goodly order dight:

* * * * * * *

As those same plumes, so seemed he vain and light,
That by his gait might easily appear;
For still he fared as dancing in delight,
And in his hands a windy fan did bear,
That in the idle air he moved still here and there."

SPENSER.

His reasoning is a tissue of glistering sophistry; his language is a cento of florid commonplaces. The smooth monotony of his style is indeed as much borrowed, is as little his own, as the courtly and often fulsome strain of his sentiments. He has no steady principles, no strong passions, nothing original, masculine, or striking in thought or expression. There is a feeble, diffuse, showy, Asiatic redundancy in all his speeches—something vapid, something second-hand in the whole cast of his mind. The light that proceeds from it gleams from the mouldering materials of corruption: the flowers that are seen there, gay and flaunting, bloom over the grave of humanity!—Mr. Canning never, by any chance, reminds one of the poet or the philosopher, of the admirer of nature, or even the man of the world—he is a mere House-of-Commons man, and since he was transferred there from College, appears never to have seen or thought of any other place. He may be said to have passed his life in making and learning to make speeches. All other objects and pursuits seem to have been quite lost upon him. He has overlooked the ordinary objects of nature, the familiar interests of human life, as beneath his notice.[1] There is no allusion in any of his speeches

[1] Mr. Canning, when on a tour to the Lakes, did Mr. Wordsworth the honour of paying him a visit. The favour was duly acknow-

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to anything passing out of the House, or not to be found in the classics. Their tone is quite Parliamentary—his is the Delphin edition of Nature. Not an image has struck his eye, not an incident has touched his heart, any farther than it could be got up for rhetorical and stage effect. This has an ill effect upon his speeches:—it gives them that shining and bloated appearance which is the result of the confined and heated atmosphere of the House. They have the look of exotics, of artificial, hot-house plants. Their glossiness, their luxuriance, and gorgeousness of colour are greater than their strength or *stamina:* they are forced, not lasting, nor will they bear transplanting from the rank and noxious soil in which they grow. Or rather, perhaps, they bear the same relation to eloquence that artificial flowers do to real ones—alike, yet not the same, without vital heat or the power of reproduction; painted, passionless, specious mockeries. They are, in fact, not the growth of truth, of nature, and feeling, but of state policy, of art, and practice. To deny that Mr. Canning has arrived to a great perfection (perhaps the greatest) in the manufacture of these sort of *common-places*, elegant, but somewhat tarnished, imposing, but not solid, would, we think, show a want of candour: to affirm that he has ever done any thing more (in his serious attempts) would, we think, show an equal want of taste and understanding.[1]

The way in which Mr. Canning gets up the staple-commodity of his speeches appears to be this. He hears an observation on the excellence of the English Constitution, or on the dangers of Reform and the fickleness

ledged, but quite unexpected. Really we do not know any one so little capable of appreciating the *Lyrical Ballads*.

[1] We once heard it said, that "Mr. Canning had the most elegant mind since Virgil." But we could not assent to this remark, as we just then happened to think of Claude Lorraine.

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and headstrong humours of the people, dropped by some Member of the House, or he meets with it in an old Debate in the time of Sir Robert Walpole, or in Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, which our accomplished scholar read, of course, as the established text-book at the University. He turns it in his mind: by dint of memory and ingenuity he illustrates it by the application of some well-known and well-authenticated simile at hand, such as "the vessel of the state," "the torrent of popular fury," "the precipice of reform," "the thunderbolt of war," "the smile of peace," &c. He improves the hint by the help of a little play upon words and upon an idle fancy into an allegory, he hooks this on to a verbal inference, which takes you by surprise, equally from the novelty of the premises and the flatness of the conclusion, refers to a passage in Cicero in support of his argument, quotes his authority, relieves exhausted attention by a sounding passage from Virgil, "like the morn risen on mid-noon," and launches the whole freight of wisdom, wit, learning, and fancy, on the floor of St. Stephen's Chapel, where it floats and glitters amidst the mingled curiosity and admiration of both sides of the House—

> "Scylla heard,
> And fell Charybdis murmur'd soft applause."

Beneath the broad and gilded chandelier that throws its light upon "the nation's Great Divan," Mr. Canning piles the lofty harangue, high over-arched with metaphor, dazzling with epithets, sparkling with jests—take it out of doors, or examine it by the light of common sense, and it is no more than a paltry string of sophisms, of trite truisms, and sorry buffooneries. There is also a House-of-Commons jargon as well as a scholastic pedantry in this gentleman's style of oratory, which is

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very displeasing to all but professional ears. "The Honourable and Learned Gentleman," and "his Honourable and Gallant Friend," are trolled over the tongue of the Honourable Speaker, "loud as a trumpet with a silver sound," and fill up the pauses of the sense or the gaps in the logic with a degree of burlesque self-complacency and pompous inanity. Mr. Canning speaks by rote; and if the words he utters become the mouth and round a period well, he cares little how cheaply he comes by them, or how dear they cost the country! Such mechanic helps to style and technical flourishes and trappings of upstart self-importance are, however, unworthy of the meanest underling of office.

There is, notwithstanding, a facility, a brilliancy, and an elegance in Mr. Canning's general style: always graceful, never abrupt, never meagre, never dry, copious without confusion, dignified without stiffness, perspicuous yet remote from common life, that must excite surprise in an extempore speaker. Mr. Canning, we apprehend, is not an extempore speaker. He only makes set speeches on set occasions. He indeed hooks them in as answers to some one that has gone before him in the debate, by taking up and commenting on a single sentence or so; but he immediately recurs to some old and favourite topic, launches into the middle of the stream, or mounts upon the high horse, and rides it to the end of the chapter. He never (that we are aware of) grappled with a powerful antagonist, overthrew him on the spot, or contested the point with him foot to foot. Mr. Canning's replies are evasions. He indeed made a capital and very deservedly-admired reply to Sir John Coxe Hippesley; but Sir John had given notice of all his motions a month beforehand, and Mr. Canning had only to lie in ambush for him with a whole magazine of facts, arguments, alliterations, quotations, jests, and squibs prepared ready

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to explode and blow him up into the air in an instant. In this manner he contrives to slip into the debate and speak to the question, as if he had lately entered the House and heard the arguments on the other side stated for the first time in his life. He has conned his speeches over for a week or a month previously; but he gives these premeditated effusions the effect of witty impromptus—the spontaneous ebullitions of the laughter or indignation or lofty enthusiasm of the moment. His manner tells this. It is that of a person trying to recollect a speech, and reciting it from beginning to end with studied gesture, and in an emphatic but monotonous and somewhat affected tone of voice, rather than of a person uttering words and thoughts that have occurred to him for the first time, and hurried away by an involuntary impulse, speaking with more or less hesitation, faster or slower, and with more or less passion, according as the occasion requires.

Mr. Canning is a conventional speaker; he is an optional politician. He has a ready and splendid assortment of arguments upon all ordinary questions: he takes that side or view of a question that is dictated by his vanity, his interest, or his habits, and endeavours to make the best he can of it. Truth, liberty, justice, humanity, war or peace, civilization or barbarism, are things of little consequence, except for him to make speeches upon them. He thinks "the worse the better reason," if he can only make it appear so to others; and in the attempt to confound and mislead, he is greatly assisted by really perceiving no difference himself. It is not what a thing is, but what he can say about it, that is ever uppermost in his mind; and why should he be squeamish or have any particular choice, since his words are all equally fine, and delivered with equal volubility of tongue? His balanced periods are the scale "that

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makes these odds all even." Our Orator does not confine himself to any one view of a subject. He does not blind himself by any dull prejudice: he does not tie himself down to any pedantic rules or abstract principle. He does not listen implicitly to common sense, nor does he follow the independent dictates of his own judgment. No, he picks and chooses among all these, as best suits his purpose. He plucks out the grey hairs of a question, and then again the black. He shifts his position; it is a ride-and-tie system with him. He mounts sometimes behind prejudice, and sometimes behind reason. He is now with the wise, and then again with the vulgar. He drivels, or he rages. He is now wedded to antiquity: anon there is no innovation too startling for him. At one time he is literal, at another visionary and romantic. At one time the honour of the country sways him, at another its interest. One moment he is all for liberty, and the next for slavery. First we are to hold the balance of Europe, and to dictate and domineer over the whole world; and then we are to creep into our shells and draw in our horns; one moment resembling Don Quixote, and the next playing the part of Sancho Panza! And why not? All these are topics, are *cues* used in the game of politics, are colours in the changeable coat of party, are dilemmas in casuistry, are pretexts in diplomacy; and Mr. Canning has them all at his fingers' ends. What is there then to prevent his using any of them as he pleases? Nothing in the world but feeling or principle; and as Mr. Canning is not withheld by these from running his heedless career, the application of his ingenuity and eloquence in all such cases is perfectly arbitrary, "quite *optional*," as Mr. Liston expresses it. A wise man would have some settled opinion, a good man would wish well to some cause, a modest man would be afraid to act without feeling sure of his

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ground, or to show an utter disregard of right or wrong. Mr. Canning has the luckless ambition to play off the tricks of a political rope-dancer, and he chooses to do it on the nerves of humanity! He has called out for war during thirty years without ceasing, "like importunate Guinea fowls, one note day and night;" he has made the House and the country ring with his vain clamour, and now for the first time he is silent, "quite chopfallen." Like Bottom in the play, "he aggravates his voice like a sucking dove;" "he roars you an 'twere any nightingale!" After the failure of Buonaparte's Russian expedition, Mr. Canning exclaimed exultingly, and with a daring enthusiasm that seemed to come from the heart, that "he rejoiced that barbarism had been the first to resist invasion, since it showed that the love of national independence was an instinctive principle in every country, superior even to the love of liberty." This plea served its turn at the time, and we heard no more of it last year when the French invaded Spain. In the war to restore Ferdinand, Mr. Canning echoed with lungs of brass the roar of "the universal Spanish nation," and the words Liberty and Humanity hung like music on his tongue; but when the feeble Monarch was restored, and trod upon the necks of those who had restored him, and threw down the mock-scaffold of the Constitution that had raised him once more to the throne, we heard no more of "the universal Spanish nation," of Liberty and Humanity. When the speeches of Mr. Canning and the Manifestos of his friends had raised the power of France to a gigantic height that hung like a precipice over our heads, we were to go on, and fight out the battle of liberty and independence, though "we buried ourselves under the ruins of the civilized world." When a monstrous claim that threatens the liberty and existence of the civilized world is openly set up and acted upon, and a word from

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Mr. Canning would arrest its progress in the direction in which it is moving with obscene, ghastly, blood-stained strides, he courteously and with great condescension reminds his hearers of "the inimitable satire of Cervantes," and that there is a proverbial expression borrowed from it, and that the epithet *Quixotic* would be eminently applicable to the conduct of Great Britain if she interfered in the affairs of the continent at the present juncture. And yet there are persons who persist in believing that Mr. Canning is anything more than a pivot on whose oily hinges state policy turns easily at this moment, unheard, unseen, and that he has views and feelings of his own that are a pledge for his integrity. If all this were fickleness, caprice, forgetfulness, accident, folly, it would be well or would not much signify; we should stand a chance of sometimes being right, sometimes wrong; or if the ostensible motives were the real ones, they would balance one another. At one time we should be giving a lift to liberty, at another we should be advancing our own interests: now we should be generous to others, then we should be just to ourselves, but always we should be doing something or other fit to be done and to be named, and acting up to one or other of Mr. Canning's fine pleas of religion, morality, or social order. Is that the case? Nothing was said for twenty years about the restoration of the Bourbons as the object of the war. Who doubts it now? This cause skulked behind the throne, and was not let out in any of Mr. Canning's speeches. The cloven foot was concealed by so much flaunting oratory, by so many different facings and piebald patchwork liveries of ruinous policy or perfidious principle, as not to be suspected. This is what makes such persons as Mr. Canning dangerous. Clever men are the tools with which bad men work. The march of sophistry is devious: the march of power

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is one. Its means, its tools, its pretexts are various, and borrowed like the hues of the chameleon from any object that happens to be at hand: its object is ever the same, and deadly as the serpent's fang. It moves on to its end with crested majesty: erect, silent, with eyes sunk and fixed, undiverted by fear, unabashed by shame; and puny orators and patriot mountebanks play tricks before it to amuse the crowd, till it crushes the world in its monstrous folds. There is one word about which nothing has been said all this while in accounting for Mr. Canning's versatility of mind and vast resources in reasoning—it is the word *Legitimacy*. It is the key with which you "pluck out the heart of his mystery." It is the touchstone by which all his other eloquence is to be tried, and made good or found wanting. It is the casting-weight in the scale of sound policy, or that makes humanity and liberty kick the beam. It is the secret of the Ayes and Noes: it accounts for the Majorities and Minorities. It weighs down all other considerations, hides all flaws, makes up for all deficiencies, removes all obstacles, is the crown of success, and makes defeat glorious. It has all the power of the Crown on its side, and all the madness of the people. All Mr. Canning's speeches are but so many different *periphrases* for this one word—*Legitimacy*. It is the foundation of his magnanimity and the source of his pusillanimity. It is the watchword equally of his oratory or his silence. It is the principle of his interference and of his forbearance. It makes him move forward, or retreat, or stand still. With this word rounded closely in his ear, and with fifty evasions for it in his mouth, he advances boldly to "the deliverance of mankind"—into the hands of legitimate kings, but can do nothing to deliver them out of their power. When the liberty and independence of mankind can be construed to mean the cause of kings and the

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doctrine of divine right, Mr. Canning is a virago on the side of humanity—when they mean the cause of the people and the reducing of arbitrary power within the limits of constitutional law, his patriotism and humanity flag, and he is

"Of his port as meek as is a maid!"

This word makes his tropes and figures expand and blaze out like phosphorus, or "freezes his spirits up like fish in a pond." It smites with its petrific mace, it deadens with its torpedo touch, the Minister, the Parliament, the people, and makes this vast, free, enlightened, and enterprising country a body without a soul, an inert mass, like the hulks of our men of war, which Mr. Canning saw and described so well at Plymouth. It is the same word that, announcing the profanation of "the golden rounds that bind the hollow temples of a king" by unhallowed hands, would fill their sails, and hurl their thunders on rebel shores. It denounces war: it whispers peace. It is echoed by the groans of the nations, is sanctified by their blood, bought by their treasure. It is this that fills the time-rent towers of the Inquisition with tears and piercing cries; and owing to this Manzotti shrieks in Italian dungeons, while Mr. Canning soothes the House of Commons with the soft accents of liberty and peace! In fine, Mr. Canning's success as an orator, and the space he occupies in the public mind, are strong indications of the Genius of the Age, in which words have obtained a mastery over things, and "to call evil good and good evil," is thought the mark of a superior and happy spirit. An accomplished statesman, in our day, is one who extols the Constitution and violates it—who talks about religion and social order, and means slavery and superstition. The Whigs are always reminding the reigning family of

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the principles that raised them to the throne—the Tories labour as hard to substitute those that will keep them there. There is a dilemma here, which is not easily got over; and to solve the difficulty and reconcile the contradiction, was the great problem of the late King's reign. The doubtful lubricity of Mr. Canning's style was one of the rollers by which the transition was effected, and Legitimacy shown to be a middle term between divine right and the choice of the people, compatible with both, and convertible into either, at the discretion of the Crown or pleasure of the speaker. Mr. Canning does not disgrace his pretensions on other questions. He is a sophist by profession, a palliator of every powerful and profitable abuse. His shuffling, trifling speeches on Reform are well-known. He sometimes adds the petulance of the school-boy to his stock of worn-out invention; though his unfeeling taunt on the "revered and ruptured Ogden" met with a reception which will make him cautious how he tampers again with human infirmity and individual suffering, as the subject of ribald jests and profligate alliteration.

The thing in which Mr. Canning excels most is wit; and his wit is confined to parody. The *Rejected Addresses* have been much and deservedly admired; but we do not think the parodies in them, however ingenious or ludicrous, are to be compared with those in the *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, and some of the very best of these are by Mr. Canning. Among others are, we believe, the *German Play* and the imitation of Mr. Southey's *Sapphics*. Much as we admire, we do not wonder at Mr. Canning's excellence in this department. Real, original wit he has none; for that implies sense and feeling, and an insight into the real differences of things; but from a want of sympathy with anything but forms and common-places, he can easily let down the sense of others

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so as to make nonsense of it. He has no enthusiasm or sensibility to make him overlook the meanness of a subject, or a little irregularity in the treatment of it, from the interest it excites: to a mind like his, the serious and affecting is a kind of natural burlesque. It is a matter of course for him to be struck with the absurdity of the romantic or singular in any way, to whom everything out of the beaten track is absurd, and "to turn what is serious into farce" by transferring the same expressions to perfectly indifferent and therefore contemptible subjects. To make any description or sentiment ludicrous, it is only necessary to take away all feeling from it: the ludicrous is ready-made to Mr. Canning's hands. The poetry, the heart-felt interest of everything escapes through his apprehension, like a snake out of its skin, and leaves the slough of parody behind it. Anything more light or worthless cannot well be imagined.[1]

[1] We have said nothing of the impiety of Mr. Canning's parodies, though a great deal has been said of the impiety of Mr. Hone's, which unfortunately happen to be on the other side of the question. It is true that "one man may steal a horse sooner than another can look over a hedge." Mr. Hone is not a Cabinet Minister, and therefore is not allowed to take liberties with the Liturgy. It is to no purpose to urge that Mr. Hone is a very good-natured man, that he is mild and inoffensive in his manners, that he is utterly void of guile, with a great deal of sincere piety, and that his greatest vice is that he is fond of a joke, and given to black-letter reading. The answer is—"But he has written parodies"—and it is to no purpose to reply—So has Mr. Canning! He is a Cabinet Minister, and therefore incapable of any thing vulgar or profane. One would think that the triumphant question put by Mr. Hone to his Jury, "Whether Mr. Jekyll's Parody on Black-eyed Susan was meant to ridicule Sir William Curtis or the ballad of Black-eyed Susan?" would have put an end for ever to the cant of this subject, if reason could put an end to cant on any subject. The fate of different men is curious. Mr. Canning, who has all his life been defending the most odious and

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mischievous men and measures, passes, on that very account, for a most amiable character and an accomplished statesman. Mr. Hone, who defended himself against a charge of blasphemy for a parody on the Church Service, of which Mr. Canning had furnished him with a precedent, rose from the attack by the force of good-nature, and by that noble spirit of freedom and honesty, in which to be unjustly accused is to be superior to all fear, and to speak truth is to be eloquent—but that he did not suffer himself to be crushed to atoms, and made a willing sacrifice to the prejudice, talent, and authority arrayed against him, is a resistance to the opinions of the world and the insolence of power, that can never be overlooked or forgiven.

> "A wit's a feather, and a chief's a rod:
> An honest man's the noblest work of God!"

[Not only Canning, but Dr. Law, Bishop of Carlisle, father of the Ellenborough, who tried Hone, made a parody, which Hone offered in Court to hand up for his lordship to see.—ED.]

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MR. GIFFORD.

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MR. GIFFORD.[1]

MR. GIFFORD was originally bred to some handicraft. He afterwards contrived to learn Latin, and was for some time an usher in a school, till he became a tutor in a nobleman's family. The low-bred, self-taught man, the pedant, and the dependent on the great, contribute to form the Editor of the *Quarterly Review*. He is admirably qualified for this situation, which he has held for some years, by a happy combination of defects, natural and acquired; and in the event of his death it will be difficult to provide him a suitable successor.

Mr. Gifford has no pretensions to be thought a man of genius, of taste, or even of general knowledge. He merely understands the mechanical and instrumental part of learning. He is a critic of the last age, when the different editions of an author or the dates of his several performances were all that occupied the inquiries of a profound scholar, and the spirit of the writer or the beauties of his style were left to shift for themselves, or exercise the fancy of the light and superficial reader. In studying an old author, he has no notion of any thing beyond adjusting a point, proposing a different reading, or correcting, by the collation of various copies, an error of the press.[2]

[1] Compare with this Criticism *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq., from William Hazlitt, Esq.*, 1819, reprinted *infrâ*.—Ed.

[2] This is quite true. The late Mr. Dyce entertained a high

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In appreciating a modern one, if it is an enemy, the first thing he thinks of is to charge him with bad grammar: he scans his sentences instead of weighing his sense; or if it is a friend, the highest compliment he conceives it possible to pay him is, that his thoughts and expressions are moulded on some hackneyed model. His standard of *ideal* perfection is what he himself now is, a person of *mediocre* literary attainments: his utmost contempt is shown by reducing any one to what he himself once was, a person without the ordinary advantages of education and learning. It is accordingly assumed with much complacency in his critical pages, that Tory writers are classical and courtly as a matter of course, as it is a standing jest and evident truism that Whigs and Reformers must be persons of low birth and breeding, imputations from one of which he himself has narrowly escaped, and both of which he holds in suitable abhorrence. He stands over a contemporary performance with all the self-conceit and self-importance of a country schoolmaster, tries it by technical rules, affects not to understand the meaning, examines the handwriting, the spelling, shrugs up his shoulders and chuckles over a slip of the pen, and keeps a sharp lookout for a false concord and—a flogging.

There is nothing liberal, nothing humane in his style of judging: it is altogether petty, captious, and literal. The Editor's political subserviency adds the last finishing [stroke] to his ridiculous pedantry and vanity. He has all his life been a follower in the train of wealth and power, strives to back his pretensions on Parnassus by a place at court, and to gild his reputation as a man of letters

opinion of Gifford's editorial ability; but I have always thought that he was too capricious and arbitrary in his treatment of texts, and that he owed his celebrity in large measure to his high literary position and the low standard of such learning in his day.—Ed.

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by the smile of greatness. He thinks his works are stamped with additional value by having his name in the *Red-Book*. He looks up to the distinctions of rank and station as he does to those of learning, with the gross and over-weening adulation of his early origin. All his notions are low, upstart, servile. He thinks it the highest honour to a poet to be patronised by a peer or by some dowager of quality. He is prouder of a court-livery than of a laurel-wreath, and is only sure of having established his claims to respectability by having sacrificed those of independence. He is a retainer to the Muses, a door-keeper to learning, a lacquey in the State. He believes that modern literature should wear the fetters of classical antiquity; that truth is to be weighed in the scales of opinion and prejudice; that power is equivalent to right; that genius is dependent on rules; that taste and refinement of language consist in *word-catching*.

Many persons suppose that Mr. Gifford knows better than he pretends, and that he is shrewd, artful and designing. But perhaps it may be nearer the mark to suppose that his dulness is guarantee for his sincerity, or that, before he is the tool of the profligacy of others, he is the dupe of his own jaundiced feelings and narrow, hoodwinked perceptions.

> "Destroy his fib or sophistry: in vain—
> The creature's at his dirty work again!"

But this is less from choice or perversity, than because he cannot help it, and can do nothing else. He damns a beautiful expression less out of spite than because he really does not understand it; any novelty of thought or sentiment gives him a shock from which he cannot recover for some time; and he naturally takes his revenge for the alarm and uneasiness occasioned him without referring to venal or party motives. He garbles

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an author's meaning, not so much wilfully, as because it is a pain to him to enlarge his microscopic view to take in the context, when a particular sentence or passage has struck him as quaint and out of the way. He fly-blows an author's style, and picks out detached words and phrases for cynical reprobation, simply because he feels himself at home, or takes a pride and pleasure in this sort of petty warfare. He is tetchy and impatient of contradiction, sore with wounded pride, angry at obvious faults, more angry at unforeseen beauties. He has the *chalk-stones* in his understanding, and from being used to long confinement, cannot bear the slightest jostling or irregularity of motion. He may call out with the fellow in the *Tempest*—"I am not Stephano, but a cramp!"

He would go back to the standard of opinions, style, faded ornaments and insipid formalities that came into fashion about forty years ago. Flashes of thought, flights of fancy, idiomatic expressions, he sets down among the signs of the times, the extraordinary occurrences of the age we live in. They are marks of a restless and revolutionary spirit: they disturb his composure of mind, and threaten (by implication) the safety of the State. His slow, snail-paced, bed-rid habits of reasoning cannot keep up with the whirling, eccentric motion, the rapid, perhaps extravagant combinations of modern literature. He has long been stationary himself, and is determined that others shall remain so. The hazarding a paradox is like letting off a pistol close to his ear: he is alarmed and offended. The using an elliptical mode of expression (such as he did not use to find in Guides to the English Tongue) jars him like coming suddenly to a step in a flight of stairs that you were not aware of. He *pishes* and *pshaws* at all this, exercises a sort of interjectional criticism on what ex-

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cites his spleen, his envy or his wonder, and hurls his meagre anathemas *ex cathedrâ* at all those writers who are indifferent alike to his precepts and his example!

Mr. Gifford, in short, is possessed of that sort of learning which is likely to result from an over-anxious desire to supply the want of the first rudiments of education: that sort of wit which is the offspring of ill-humour or bodily pain: that sort of sense which arises from a spirit of contradiction and a disposition to cavil at and dispute the opinions of others: and that sort of reputation which is the consequence of bowing to established authority and ministerial influence. He dedicates to some great man, and receives his compliments in return. He appeals to some great name, and the Undergraduates of the two Universities look up to him as an oracle of wisdom. He throws the weight of his verbal criticism and puny discoveries in *black-letter* reading into the gap, that is supposed to be making in the Constitution by Whigs and Radicals, whom he qualifies without mercy as dunces and miscreants, and so entitles himself to the protection of the Church and State. The character of his mind is an utter want of independence and magnanimity in all that he attempts. He cannot go alone; he must have crutches, a go-cart and trammels, or he is timid, fretful and helpless as a child. He can not conceive of anything different from what he finds it, and hates those who pretend to a greater reach of intellect or boldness of spirit than himself. He inclines, by a natural and deliberate bias, to the traditional in laws and government, to the orthodox in religion, to the safe in opinion, to the trite in imagination, to the technical in style, to whatever implies a surrender of individual judgment into the hands of authority and a subjection of individual feeling to mechanic rules.

If he finds any one flying in the face of these, or

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straggling from the beaten path, he thinks he has them at a notable disadvantage, and falls foul of them without loss of time, partly to soothe his own sense of mortified self-consequence, and as an edifying spectacle to his legitimate friends. He takes none but unfair advantages. He *twits* his adversaries (that is, those who are not in the leading-strings of his school or party) with some personal or accidental defect. If a writer has been punished for a political libel, he is sure to hear of it in a literary criticism. If a lady goes on crutches and is out of favour at court, she is reminded of it in Mr. Gifford's manly satire. He sneers at people of low birth or who have not had a college education, partly to hide his own want of certain advantages, partly as well-timed flattery to those who possess them. He has a right to laugh at poor, unfriended, untitled genius from wearing the livery of rank and letters, as footmen behind a coronet-coach laugh at the rabble. He keeps good company, and forgets himself. He stands at the door of Mr. Murray's shop, and will not let any body pass but the well-dressed mob or some followers of the court. To edge into the *Quarterly* Temple of Fame the candidate must have a diploma from the Universities, a passport from the Treasury. Otherwise, it is a breach of etiquette to let him pass, an insult to the better sort who aspire to the love of letters, and may chance to drop in to the *Feast of the Poets*. Or, if he cannot manage it thus, or get rid of the claim on the bare ground of poverty or want of school-learning, he *trumps* up an excuse for the occasion, such as that "a man was confined in Newgate a short time before." It is not a *lie* on the part of the critic; it is only an amiable subserviency to the will of his betters, like that of a menial who is ordered to deny his master: a sense of propriety, a knowledge of the world, a poetical and moral license.

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Such fellows (such is his cue from his employers) should at any rate be kept out of privileged places: persons who have been convicted of prose-libels ought not to be suffered to write poetry. If the fact was not exactly as it was stated, it was something of the kind, or it *ought* to have been so; the assertion was a pious fraud; the public, the court, the prince himself might read the work, but for this mark of opprobrium set upon it. It was not to be endured that an insolent plebeian should aspire to elegance, taste, fancy; it was throwing down the barriers which ought to separate the higher and the lower classes, the loyal and the disloyal. The paraphrase of the story of Dante was therefore to perform quarantine; it was to seem not yet recovered from the gaol infection; there was to be a taint upon it, as there was none in it; and all this was performed by a single slip of Mr. Gifford's pen! We would willingly believe (if we could) that in this case there was as much weakness and prejudice as there was malice and cunning.

Again, we do not think it possible that under any circumstances the writer of the *Verses to Anna* could enter into the spirit or delicacy of Mr. Keats' poetry. The fate of the latter somewhat resembled that of

> "a bud bit by an envious worm,
> Ere it could spread its sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate its beauty to the sun."

Mr. Keats' ostensible crime was that he had been praised in the *Examiner* newspaper; a greater and more unpardonable offence probably was that he was a true poet, with all the errors and beauties of youthful genius to answer for. Mr. Gifford was as insensible to the one as he was inexorable to the other. Let the reader judge from the two subjoined specimens how far the one writer could ever, without a presumption equalled only by a

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want of self-knowledge, set himself in judgment on the other.

" Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke in pallid moonshine died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air and visions wide:
No utter'd syllable, or woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her heart in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

" A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

" Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast.
As down she knelt for Heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint.
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for Heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

" Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

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"Soon trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away:
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day:
Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again."[1]

With the rich beauties and the dim obscurities of lines like these let us contrast the Verses addressed *To a Tuft of early Violets* by the fastidious author of the Baviad and Mæviad.—

"Sweet flowers! that from your humble beds
Thus prematurely dare to rise,
And trust your unprotected heads
To cold Aquarius' watery skies.

"Retire, retire! *These* tepid airs
Are not the genial brood of May;
That sun with light malignant glares,
And flatters only to betray.

"Stern Winter's reign is not yet past—
Lo! while your buds prepare to blow,
On icy pinions comes the blast,
And nips your root, and lays you low.

"Alas, for such ungentle doom!
But I will shield you; and supply
A kindlier soil on which to bloom,
A nobler bed on which to die.

"Come then—'ere yet the morning ray
Has drunk the dew that gems your crest,
And drawn your balmiest sweets away;
O come and grace my Anna's breast.

[1] [*Eve of St. Agnes* (Poems by Milnes, 1854, p. 221-2)—Ed.]

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"Ye droop, fond flowers! But did ye know
What worth, what goodness there reside,
Your cups with liveliest tints would glow;
And spread their leaves with conscious pride.

"For there has liberal Nature joined
Her riches to the stores of Art,
And added to the vigorous mind
The soft, the sympathising heart.

"Come then—'ere yet the morning ray
Has drunk the dew that gems your crest,
And drawn your balmiest sweets away;
O come and grace my Anna's breast.

"O! I should think—*that fragrant bed*
Might I but hope with you to share—[1]
Years of anxiety repaid
By one short hour of transport there.

"More blest than me, thus shall ye live
Your little day; and when ye die
Sweet flowers! the grateful Muse shall give
A verse; the sorrowing maid, a sigh.

"While I alas! no distant date,
Mix with the dust from whence I came,
Without a friend to weep my fate,
Without a stone to tell my name."

We subjoin one more specimen of these "wild strains" [2]

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[1] What an awkward bedfellow for a tuft of violets!

[2] "How oft, O Dart! what time the faithful pair
Walk'd forth, the fragrant hour of eve to share,
On thy romantic banks, have my *wild strains*
(Not yet forgot amidst my native plains)
While thou hast sweetly gurgled down the vale,
Filled up the pause of love's delightful tale!
While, ever as she read, the conscious maid,
By faultering voice and downcast looks betray'd,

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said to be "*Written two years after the preceding.*" ECCE ITERUM CRISPINUS!

"I wish I was where Anna lies;
For I am sick of lingering here,
And every hour Affection cries,
Go, and partake her humble bier.

"I wish I could! for when she died
I lost my all; and life has prov'd
Since that sad hour a dreary void,
A waste unlovely and unlov'd.

"But who, when I am turn'd to clay,
Shall duly to her grave repair,
And pluck the ragged moss away,
And weeds that have "no business there?"

Would blushing on her lover's neck recline,
And with her finger—point the tenderest line!"
Mœviad, pp. 194, 202.

Yet the author assures us just before, that in these "wild strains" "all was plain."

"Even then (admire, John Bell! my simple ways)
No heaven and hell danced madly through my lays,
No oaths, no execrations; *all was plain;*
Yet trust me, while thy ever jingling train
Chime their sonorous woes with frigid art,
And shock the reason and revolt the heart;
My hopes and fears, in nature's language drest,
Awakened love in many a gentle breast."
Ibid, v. 185-92.

If any one else had composed these "wild strains," in which "all is plain," Mr. Gifford would have accused them of three things: "1. Downright nonsense. 2. Downright frigidity. 3. Downright doggrel;" and proceeded to anatomise them very cordially in his way. As it is, he is thrilled with a very pleasing horror at his former scenes of tenderness, and "gasps at the recollection" "of *watery Aquarius!*" *Sed ohe! jam satis est!* "Why rack a grub—a butterfly upon a wheel?"

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"And who, with pious hand, shall bring,
The flowers she cherish'd, snow-drops cold,
And violets that unheeded spring,
To scatter o'er her hallow'd mould?

"And who, while Memory loves to dwell
Upon her name for ever dear,
Shall feel his heart with passions swell,
And pour the bitter, bitter tear?

"I DID IT; and would fate allow,
Should visit still, should still deplore—
But health and strength have left me now,
But I, alas! can weep no more.

"Take then, sweet maid! this simple strain,
The last I offer at thy shrine;
Thy grave must then undeck'd remain,
And all thy memory fade with mine.

"And can thy soft persuasive look,
That voice that might with music vie,
Thy air that every gazer took,
Thy matchless eloquence of eye—

"Thy spirits, frolicsome as good,
Thy courage, by no ills dismay'd,
Thy patience by no wrongs subdued,
Thy gay good-humour—can they "fade?"

"Perhaps—but sorrow dims my eye:
Cold turf, which I no more must view,
Dear name, which I no more must sigh,
A long, a last, a sad adieu!"

It may be said in extenuation of the low, mechanic vein of these impoverished lines, that they were written at an early age. They were the inspired production of a youthful lover! Mr. Gifford was thirty when he wrote them: Mr. Keats died when he was scarce twenty![1]

[1] Keats died on the 23rd February, 1821, in his twenty-fourth year. I remember his kind friend, Mr. Joseph Severn, well. I met him at Leigh Hunt's.—ED.

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Farther it may be said, that Mr. Gifford hazarded his first poetical attempts under all the disadvantages of a neglected education: but the same circumstance, together with a few unpruned redundancies of fancy and quaintnesses of expression, was made the plea on which Mr. Keats was hooted out of the world, and his fine talents and wounded sensibilities consigned to an early grave. In short, the treatment of this heedless candidate for poetical fame might serve as a warning, and was intended to serve as a warning, to all unfledged tyros, how they venture upon any such doubtful experiments, except under the auspices of some lord of the bedchamber or Government Aristarchus, and how they imprudently associate themselves with men of mere popular talent or independence of feeling!

It is the same in prose works. The Editor scorns to enter the lists of argument with any proscribed writer of the opposite party. He does not refute, but denounces him. He makes no concessions to an adversary, lest they should in some way be turned against him. He only feels himself safe in the fancied insignificance of others. He only feels himself superior to those whom he stigmatizes as the lowest of mankind. All persons are without common-sense and honesty who do not believe implicity (with him) in the immaculateness of Ministers and the divine origin of Kings.

Thus he informed the world that the author of TABLE-TALK was a person who could not write a sentence of common English, and who could hardly spell his own name, because he was not a friend to the restoration of the Bourbons, and had the assurance to write *Characters of Shakespear's Plays* in a style of criticism somewhat different from Mr. Gifford's. He charged this writer with imposing on the public by a flowery style; and

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when the latter ventured to refer[1] to a work of his, called *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action*, which has not a single ornament in it, as a specimen of his original studies and the proper bias of his mind, the learned critic, with a shrug of great self-satisfaction, said, "It was amusing to see this person, sitting like one of Brouwer's Dutch boors over his gin and tobacco-pipes, and fancying himself a Leibnitz!" The question was, whether the subject of Mr. Gifford's censure had ever written such a work or not; for if he had, he had amused himself with something besides gin and tobacco-pipes. But our Editor, by virtue of the situation he holds, is superior to facts or arguments: he is accountable neither to the public nor to authors for what he says of them, but owes it to his employers to prejudice the work and vilify the writer, if the latter is not avowedly ready to range himself on the stronger side.

The *Quarterly Review*, besides the political *tirades* and denunciations of suspected writers, intended for the guidance of the heads of families, is filled up with accounts of books of Voyages and Travels for the amusement of the younger branches. The poetical department is almost a sinecure, consisting of mere summary decisions and a list of quotations. Mr. Croker is understood to contribute the St. Helena articles and the liberality, Mr. Canning the practical good sense, Mr. D'Israeli the good-nature, Mr. Jacob the modesty, Mr. Southey the consistency, and the Editor himself the chivalrous spirit and the attacks on Lady Morgan. It is a double crime, and excites a double portion of spleen in the Editor, when female writers are not advocates of passive obedience and non-resistance. This Journal, then, is a depository for every species of political sophistry and personal calumny. There is no abuse or

[1] In the Letter to Gifford, 1819.—Ed.

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corruption that does not there find a jesuitical palliation or a bare-faced vindication. There we meet the slime of hypocrisy, the varnish of courts, the cant of pedantry, the cobwebs of the law, the iron hand of power. Its object is as mischievous as the means by which it is pursued are odious. The intention is to poison the sources of public opinion and of individual fame, to pervert literature from being the natural ally of freedom and humanity into an engine of priestcraft and despotism, and to undermine the spirit of the English constitution and the independence of the English character. The Editor and his friends systematically explode every principle of liberty, laugh patriotism and public spirit to scorn, resent every pretence to integrity as a piece of singularity or insolence, and strike at the root of all free inquiry or discussion by running down every writer as a vile scribbler and a bad member of society, who is not a hireling and a slave. No means are stuck at in accomplishing this laudable end. Strong in patronage, they trample on truth, justice and decency. They claim the privilege of court-favourites. They keep as little faith with the public as with their opponents.

No statement in the *Quarterly Review* is to be trusted: there is no fact that is not misrepresented in it, no quotation that is not garbled, no character that is not slandered, if it can answer the purposes of a party to do so. The weight of power, of wealth, of rank is thrown into the scale, gives its impulse to the machine; and the whole is under the guidance of Mr. Gifford's instinctive genius—of the in-born hatred of servility for independence, of dulness for talent, of cunning and impudence for truth and honesty. It costs him no effort to execute his disreputable task; in being the tool of a crooked policy, he but labours in his natural vocation. He patches up a rotten system, as he would supply the

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chasms in a worm-eaten manuscript, from a grovelling incapacity to do any thing better: thinks that if a single iota in the claims of prerogative and power were lost, the whole fabric of society would fall upon his head and crush him: and calculates that his best chance for literary reputation is by *black-balling* one half of the competitors as Jacobins and levellers, and securing the suffrages of the other half in his favour as a loyal subject and trusty partisan!

Mr. Gifford, as a satirist, is violent and abrupt. He takes obvious or physical defects, and dwells upon them with much labour and harshness of invective, but with very little wit or spirit. He expresses a great deal of anger and contempt; but you cannot tell very well why, except that he seems to be sore and out of humour. His satire is mere peevishness and spleen, or something worse—personal antipathy and rancour. We are in quite as much pain for the writer as for the object of his resentment. His address to Peter Pindar is laughable from its outrageousness. He denounces him as a wretch hateful to God and man for some of the most harmless and amusing trifles that ever were written, and the very good humour and pleasantry of which, we suspect, constituted their offence in the eyes of this Drawcansir.

His attacks on Mrs. Robinson were unmanly, and even those on Mr. Merry and the Della-Cruscan School were very much more ferocious than the occasion warranted. A little affectation and quaintness of style did not merit such severity of castigation.[1] As a translator, Mr. Gifford's version of the Roman satirist is the baldest and, in parts, the most offensive of all others.

[1] Mr. Merry was even with our author in personality of abuse. See his Lines on the Story of the Ape that was given in charge to the ex-tutor.

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We do not know why he attempted it, unless he had got it in his head that he should thus follow in the steps of Dryden, as he had already done in those of Pope in the Baviad and Mæviad. As an editor of old authors, Mr. Gifford is entitled to considerable praise for the pains he has taken in revising the text, and for some improvements he has introduced into it. He had better have spared the notes in which, though he has detected the blunders of previous commentators, he has exposed his own ill-temper and narrowness of feeling more. As a critic, he has thrown no light on the character and spirit of his authors. He has shown no striking power of analysis nor of original illustration, though he has chosen to exercise his pen on writers most congenial to his own turn of mind, from their dry and caustic vein—Massinger and Ben Johnson. What he will make of Marlowe, it is difficult to guess.[1] He has none of "the fiery quality" of the poet.

Mr. Gifford does not take for his motto on these occasions *Spiritus precipitandus est!* His most successful efforts in this way are barely respectable. In general, his observations are petty, ill-concocted, and discover as little *tact*, as they do a habit of connected reasoning. Thus, for instance, in attempting to add the name of Massinger to the list of Catholic poets, our minute critic insists on the profusion of crucifixes, glories, angelic visions, garlands of roses, and clouds of incense scattered through the *Virgin-Martyr*, as evidence of the theological sentiments meant to be inculcated by the play, when the least reflection might have taught him, that they proved nothing but the author's poetical conception of the character and *costume* of his subject. A writer might,

[1] He did not undertake that writer; but an edition of his plays and poems was published in 1826 under the care of a Mr. Robinson; and a very poor affair it was.—Ed.

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with the same sinister, short-sighted shrewdness, be accused of Heathenism for talking of Flora and Ceres in a poem on the Seasons! What are produced as the exclusive badges and occult proofs of Catholic bigotry, are nothing but the adventitious ornaments and external symbols, the gross and sensible language—in a word, the *poetry* of Christianity in general. What indeed shows the frivolousness of the whole inference is that Decker, who is asserted by our critic to have contributed some of the most passionate and fantastic of these devotional scenes, is not even suspected of a leaning to Popery. In like manner, he excuses Massinger for the grossness of one of his plots (that of the *Unnatural Combat*) by saying that it was supposed to take place before the Christian era. By this shallow commonplace persuading himself, or fancying he could persuade others, that the crime in question (which yet on the very face of the story is made the ground of a tragic catastrophe) was first made *statutory* by the Christian religion.

The foregoing is a harsh criticism, and may be thought illiberal. But as Mr. Gifford assumes a right to say what he pleases of others, they may be allowed to speak the truth of him!

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MR. JEFFREY.

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MR JEFFREY.

THE *Quarterly Review* arose out of the *Edinburgh*, not as a corollary, but in contradiction to it. An article had appeared in the latter on Don Pedro Cevallos, which stang the Tories to the quick by the free way in which it spoke of men and things, and something must be done to check these *escapades* of the *Edinburgh*. It was not to be endured that the truth should *out* in this manner, even occasionally and half in jest. A startling shock was thus given to established prejudices; the mask was taken off from grave hypocrisy, and the most serious consequences were to be apprehended. The persons who wrote in this Review seemed "to have their hands full of truths," and now and then, in a fit of spleen or gaiety, let some of them fly; and while this practice continued, it was impossible to say that the Monarchy or the Hierarchy was safe. Some of the arrows glanced: others might stick, and in the end prove fatal. It was not the principles of the *Edinburgh Review*, but the spirit, that was looked at with jealousy and alarm. The principles were by no means decidedly hostile to existing institutions: but the spirit was that of fair and free discussion. A field was open to argument and wit; every

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question was tried upon its own ostensible merits, and there was no foul play. The tone was that of a studied impartiality (which many called *trimming*) or of a sceptical indifference.

This tone of impartiality and indifference, however, did not at all suit those who profited or existed by abuses, who breathed the very air of corruption. They knew well enough that "those who are not *for* them are *against* them." They wanted a publication impervious alike to truth and candour, that, hoodwinked itself, should lead public opinion blindfold, that should stick at nothing to serve the turn of a party, that should be the exclusive organ of prejudice, the sordid tool of power: that should go the whole length of want of principle in palliating every dishonest measure, of want of decency in defaming every honest man: that should prejudge every question, traduce every opponent: that should give no quarter to fair inquiry or liberal sentiment: that should be "ugly all over with hypocrisy," and present one foul blotch of servility, intolerance, falsehood, spite, and ill-manners.

The *Quarterly Review* was accordingly set up.

> "Sithence no fairy lights, no quickning ray,
> Nor stir of pulse, nor object to entice
> Abroad the spirits; but the cloister'd heart
> Sits squat at home, like Pagod in a niche
> Obscure!"

This event was hailed (and the omen has been fulfilled!) as a great relief to all those of his Majesty's subjects who are firmly convinced that the only way to have things remain exactly as they are is to put a stop to all inquiries whether they are right or wrong, and that, if you cannot answer a man's arguments, you may at least try to take away his character.

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We do not implicitly bow to the political opinions, nor to the critical decisions of the *Edinburgh Review;* but we must do justice to the talent with which they are supported, and to the tone of manly explicitness in which they are delivered.[1] They are eminently characteristic of the spirit of the age, as it is the express object of the *Quarterly Review* to discountenance and extinguish that spirit, both in theory and practice. The *Edinburgh Review* stands upon the ground of opinion; it asserts the supremacy of intellect. The pre-eminence it claims is from an acknowledged superiority of talent and information, and literary attainment; and it does not build one tittle of its influence on ignorance, or prejudice, or authority, or personal malevolence. It takes up a question, and argues it *pro* and *con* with great knowledge and boldness and skill; it points out an absurdity, and runs it down fairly, and according to the evidence adduced. In the former case, its conclusions may be wrong; there may be a bias in the mind of the writer; but he states the arguments and circumstances on both sides, from which a judgment is to be formed. It is not his cue: he has neither the effrontery nor the meanness to falsify facts or to suppress objections.

In the latter case, or where a vein of sarcasm or irony is resorted to, the ridicule is not barbed by some allusion (false or true) to private history; the object of it has brought the infliction on himself by some literary folly or political delinquency, which is referred to as the understood and justifiable provocation, instead of being held up to scorn as a knave for not being a tool, or as a blockhead for thinking for himself. In the *Edinburgh*

[1] The style of philosophical criticism, which has been the boast of the Edinburgh Review, was first introduced into the Monthly Review about the year 1796 in a series of articles by Mr. William Taylor of Norwich.

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Review the talents of those on the opposite side are always extolled *pleno ore;* in the *Quarterly Review* they are denied altogether; and the justice that is in this way withheld from them is compensated by a proportionable supply of personal abuse.

A man of genius who is a lord, and who publishes with Mr. Murray, may now and then stand as good a chance as a lord who is not a man of genius and who publishes with Messrs. Longman: but that is the utmost extent of the impartiality of the *Quarterly*. From its account you would take Lord Byron and Mr. Stuart Rose for two very pretty poets; but Mr. Moore's Magdalen Muse is sent to Bridewell without mercy, to beat hemp in silk stockings. In the *Quarterly* nothing is regarded but the political creed or external circumstances of a writer; in the *Edinburgh* nothing is ever adverted to but his literary merits. Or if there is a bias of any kind, it arises from an affectation of magnanimity and candour in giving heaped measure to those on the aristocratic side in politics, and in being critically severe on others. Thus Sir Walter Scott is lauded to the skies for his romantic powers without any allusion to his political demerits (as if this would be compromising the dignity of genius and of criticism by the introduction of party-spirit), while Lord Byron is called to a grave moral reckoning. There is, however, little of the cant of morality in the *Edinburgh Review;* and it is quite free from that of religion. It keeps to its province which is that of criticism, or to the discussion of debateable topics, and acquits itself in both with force and spirit.

This is the natural consequence of the composition of the two Reviews. The one appeals with confidence to its own intellectual resources, to the variety of its topics, to its very character and existence as a literary journal, which depend on its setting up no pretensions but those

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which it can make good by the talent and ingenuity it can bring to bear upon them. It therefore meets every question, whether of a lighter or a graver cast, on its own grounds; the other *blinks* every question, for it has no confidence but in the *powers that be*, shuts itself up in the impregnable fastnesses of authority, or makes some paltry cowardly attack (under cover of anonymous criticism) on individuals, or dispenses its award of merit entirely according to the rank or party of the writer. The faults of the *Edinburgh Review* arise out of the very consciousness of critical and logical power. In political questions it relies too little on the broad basis of liberty and humanity, enters too much into mere dry formalities, deals too often in *moot-points*, and descends too readily to a sort of special-pleading in defence of *home* truths and natural feelings. In matters of taste and criticism, its tone is sometimes apt to be supercilious and *cavalier*, from its habitual faculty of analysing defects and beauties according to given principles, from its quickness in deciding, from its facility in illustrating its views. In this latter department it has been guilty of some capital oversights.

The chief was in its treatment of the *Lyrical Ballads* at their first appearance—not in its ridicule of their puerilities, but in its denial of their beauties, because they were included in no school, because they were reducible to no previous standard or theory of poetical excellence. For this, however, considerable reparation has been made by the prompt and liberal spirit that has been shown in bringing forward other examples of poetical genius. Its capital sin, in a doctrinal point of view, has been (we shrewdly suspect) in the uniform and unqualified encouragement it has bestowed on Mr. Malthus's system. We do not mean that the *Edinburgh Review* was to join in the general *hue and cry* that was

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raised against this writer; but while it asserted the soundness of many of his arguments, and yielded its assent to the truths he has divulged, it need not have screened his errors. On this subject alone we think the *Quarterly* has the advantage of it. But as the *Quarterly Review* is a mere mass and tissue of prejudices on all subjects, it is the foible of the *Edinburgh Review* to affect a somewhat fastidious air of superiority over prejudices of all kinds, and a determination not to indulge in any of the amiable weaknesses of our nature, except as it can give a reason for the faith that is in it. Luckily, it is seldom reduced to this alternative: "reasons" are with it "as plenty as blackberries!"

Mr. Jeffrey is the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, and is understood to have contributed nearly a fourth part of the articles from its commencement. No man is better qualified for this situation, nor indeed so much so. He is certainly a person in advance of the age, and yet perfectly fitted both from knowledge and habits of mind to put a curb upon its rash and headlong spirit. He is thoroughly acquainted with the progress and pretensions of modern literature and philosophy; and to this he adds the natural acuteness and discrimination of the logician with the habitual caution and coolness of his profession. If the *Edinburgh Review* may be considered as the organ of or at all pledged to a party, that party is at least a respectable one, and is placed in the middle between two extremes. The Editor is bound to lend a patient hearing to the most paradoxical opinions and extravagant theories which have resulted in our times from the "infinite agitation of wit," but he is disposed to qualify them by a number of practical objections, of speculative doubts, of checks and drawbacks, arising out of actual circumstances and prevailing opinions, or the frailties of human nature. He has a great

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range of knowledge, an incessant activity of mind; but the suspension of his judgment, the well-balanced moderation of his sentiments, is the consequence of the very discursiveness of his reason. What may be considered as a *common-place* conclusion is often the result of a comprehensive view of all the circumstances of a case. Paradox, violence, nay even originality of conception is not seldom owing to our dwelling long and pertinaciously on some one part of a subject, instead of attending to the whole.

Mr. Jeffrey is neither a bigot nor an enthusiast. He is not the dupe of the prejudices of others, nor of his own. He is not wedded to any dogma; he is not long the sport of any whim. Before he can settle in any fond or fantastic opinion, another starts up to match it, like beads on sparkling wine. A too restless display of talent, a too undisguised statement of all that can be said for and against a question, is perhaps the great fault that is to be attributed to him. Where there is so much power and prejudice to contend with in the opposite scale, it may be thought that the balance of truth can hardly be held with a slack or an even hand, and that the infusion of a little more visionary speculation, of a little more popular indignation into the great Whig Review would be an advantage both to itself and to the cause of freedom. Much of this effect is chargeable less on an Epicurean levity of feeling or on party-trammels than on real sanguineness of disposition and a certain fineness of professional tact.

Our sprightly Scotchman is not of a desponding and gloomy turn of mind. He argues well for the future hopes of mankind from the smallest beginnings, watches the slow, gradual, reluctant growth of liberal views, and smiling sees the aloe of Reform blossom at the end of a hundred years; while the habitual subtlety of his mind

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makes him perceive decided advantages, where vulgar ignorance or passion sees only doubts and difficulty; and a flaw in an adversary's argument stands him instead of the shout of a mob, the votes of a majority, or the fate of a pitched battle. The Editor is satisfied with his own conclusions, and does not make himself uneasy about the fate of mankind. The issue, he thinks, will verify his moderate and well-founded expectations. We believe also that late events have given a more decided turn to Mr. Jeffrey's mind, and that he feels that as, in the struggle between liberty and slavery, the views of the one party have been laid bare with their success, so the exertions on the other side should become more strenuous, and a more positive stand be made against the avowed and appalling encroachments of priestcraft and arbitrary power.

The characteristics of Mr. Jeffrey's general style as a writer correspond, we think, with what we have here stated as the characteristics of his mind. He is a master of the foils; he makes an exulting display of the dazzling fence of wit and argument. His strength consists in great range of knowledge, an equal familiarity with the principles and the details of a subject, and in a glancing brilliancy and rapidity of style. Indeed, we doubt whether the brilliancy of his manner does not resolve itself into the rapidity, the variety and aptness of his illustrations. His pen is never at a loss, never stands still, and would dazzle for this reason alone, like an eye that is ever in motion. Mr. Jeffrey is far from a flowery or affected writer; he has few tropes or figures, still less any odd startling thoughts or quaint innovations in expression; but he has a constant supply of ingenious solutions and pertinent examples. He never proses, never grows dull, never wears an argument to tatters, and by the number, the liveliness and facility of his

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transitions keeps up that appearance of vivacity, of novel and sparkling effect, for which others are too often indebted to singularity of combination or tinsel ornaments.

It may be discovered by a nice observer, that Mr. Jeffrey's style of composition is that of a person accustomed to public speaking. There is no pause, no meagreness, no inanimateness, but a flow, a redundance and volubility like that of a stream or of a rolling-stone. The language is more copious than select, and sometimes two or three words perform the office of one. This copiousness and facility is perhaps an advantage in *extempore* speaking, where no stop or break is allowed in the discourse, and where any word or any number of words almost is better than coming to a dead stand; but in written compositions it gives an air of either too much carelessness or too much labour. Mr. Jeffrey's excellence, as a public speaker, has betrayed him into this peculiarity. He makes fewer *blots* in addressing an audience than anyone we remember to have heard. There is not a hair's-breadth space between any two of his words, nor is there a single expression either ill-chosen or out of its place. He speaks without stopping to take breath, with ease, with point, with elegance, and without "spinning the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument." He may be said to weave words into any shapes he pleases for use or ornament, as the glass-blower moulds the vitreous fluid with his breath; and his sentences shine like glass from their polished smoothness, and are equally transparent. His style of eloquence, indeed, is remarkable for neatness, for correctness and epigrammatic point; and he has applied this as a standard to his written compositions, where the very same degree of correctness and precision produces, from the contrast between writing and speaking, an agreeable

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diffuseness, freedom and animation. Whenever the Scotch advocate has appeared at the bar of the English House of Lords, he has been admired by those who were in the habit of attending to speeches there, as having the greatest fluency of language and the greatest subtlety of distinction of any one of the profession. The law-reporters were as little able to follow him from the extreme rapidity of his utterance as from the tenuity and evanescent nature of his reasoning.

Mr. Jeffrey's conversation is equally lively, various, and instructive. There is no subject on which he is not *au fait:* no company in which he is not ready to scatter his pearls for sport. Whether it be politics, or poetry, or science, or anecdote, or wit, or raillery, he takes up his cue without effort, without preparation, and appears equally incapable of tiring himself or his hearers. His only difficulty seems to be, not to speak, but to be silent. There is a constitutional buoyancy and elasticity of mind about him that cannot subside into repose, much less sink into dulness. There may be more original talkers, persons who occasionally surprise or interest you more; few, if any, with a more uninterrupted flow of cheerfulness and animal spirits, with a greater fund of information, and with fewer specimens of the *bathos* in their conversation. He is never absurd, nor has he any favourite points which he is always bringing forward. It cannot be denied that there is something bordering on petulance of manner; but it is of that least offensive kind which may be accounted for from merit and from success, and implies no exclusive pretensions nor the least particle of ill-will to others. On the contrary, Mr. Jeffrey is profuse of his encomiums and admiration of others, but still with a certain reservation of a right to differ or to blame. He cannot rest on one side of a question; he is obliged by a mercurial habit and dispo-

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sition to vary his point of view. If he is ever tedious, it is from an excess of liveliness: he oppresses from a sense of airy lightness. He is always setting out on a fresh scent: there are always *relays* of topics; the harness is put to, and he rattles away as delightfully and as briskly as ever. New causes are called; he holds a brief in his hand for every possible question. This is a fault. Mr. Jeffrey is not obtrusive, is not impatient of opposition, is not unwilling to be interrupted; but what is said by another seems to make no impression on him; he is bound to dispute, to answer it, as if he was in Court, or as if it were in a paltry Debating Society, where young beginners were trying their hands. This is not to maintain a character, or for want of good-nature: it is a thoughtless habit. He cannot help cross-examining a witness, or stating the adverse view of the question. He listens not to judge, but to reply. In consequence of this, you can as little tell the impression your observations make on him as what weight to assign to his.

Mr. Jeffrey shines in mixed company; he is not good in a *tête-à-tête*. You can only show your wisdom or your wit in general society: but in private your follies or your weaknesses are not the least interesting topics; and our critic has neither any of his own to confess, nor does he take delight in hearing those of others. Indeed in Scotland generally the display of personal character, the indulging your whims and humours in the presence of a friend, is not much encouraged; every one there is looked upon in the light of a machine or a collection of topics. They turn you round like a cylinder to see what use they can make of you, and drag you into a dispute with as little ceremony as they would drag out an article from an Encyclopedia. They criticise every thing, analyse every thing, argue upon every thing, dogmatise

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upon every thing; and the bundle of your habits, feelings, humours, follies and pursuits is regarded by them no more than a bundle of old clothes. They stop you in a sentiment by a question or a stare, and cut you short in a narrative by the time of night. The accomplished and ingenious person of whom we speak has been a little infected by the tone of his countrymen; he is too didactic, too pugnacious, too full of electrical shocks, too much like a voltaic battery, and reposes too little on his own excellent good sense, his own love of ease, his cordial frankness of temper and unaffected candour. He ought to have belonged to us!

The severest of critics (as he has been sometimes termed) is the best-natured of men. Whatever there may be of wavering or indecision in Mr. Jeffrey's reasoning, or of harshness in his critical decisions, in his disposition there is nothing but simplicity and kindness. He is a person that no one knows without esteeming, and who both in his public connections and private friendships, shows the same manly uprightness and unbiassed independence of spirit. At a distance, in his writings or even in his manner, there may be something to excite a little uneasiness and apprehension: in his conduct there is nothing to except against. He is a person of strict integrity himself without pretence or affectation, and knows how to respect this quality in others without prudery or intolerance. He can censure a friend or a stranger, and serve him effectually at the same time. He expresses his disapprobation, but not as an excuse for closing up the avenues of his liberality. He is a Scotchman without one particle of hypocrisy, of cant, of servility, or selfishness in his composition. He has not been spoiled by fortune—has not been tempted by power—is firm without violence, friendly without weakness—a critic and even-tempered, a casuist and an honest man

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—and, amidst the toils of his profession and the distractions of the world, retains the gaiety, the unpretending carelessness and simplicity of youth. Mr. Jeffrey in his person is slight, with a countenance of much expression and a voice of great flexibility and acuteness of tone.

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MR. BROUGHAM—SIR FRANCIS BURDETT.

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MR. BROUGHAM—SIR F. BURDETT.

THERE is a class of eloquence which has been described and particularly insisted on under the style and title of *Irish Eloquence:* there is another class which it is not absolutely unfair to oppose to this, and that is the Scotch. The first of these is entirely the offspring of *impulse*, the last of *mechanism*. The one is as full of fancy as it is bare of facts: the other excludes all fancy, and is weighed down with facts. The one is all fire, the other all ice: the one nothing but enthusiasm, extravagance, eccentricity; the other nothing but logical deductions and the most approved postulates. The one without scruple, nay, with reckless zeal, throws the reins loose on the neck of the imagination: the other pulls up with a curb-bridle, and starts at every casual object it meets in the way as a bug-bear. The genius of Irish oratory stands forth in the naked majesty of untutored nature, its eye glancing wildly round on all objects, its tongue darting forked fire. The genius of Scottish eloquence is armed in all the panoply of the schools; its drawling, ambiguous dialect seconds its circumspect dialectics; from behind the vizor that guards its mouth and shadows its pent-up brows, it sees no visions but its own set purpose, its own *data*, and its own dogmas. It "has no figures, nor no fantasies," but "those which busy care draws in the brains of men," or which set off its own superior acquirements and wisdom. It scorns to "tread the primrose path of dalliance"—it shrinks

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back from it as from a precipice, and keeps in the iron rail-way of the understanding.

Irish oratory, on the contrary, is a sort of aëronaut: it is always going up in a balloon, and breaking its neck, or coming down in the parachute. It is filled full with gaseous matter, with whim and fancy, with alliteration and antithesis, with heated passion and bloated metaphors, that burst the slender silken covering of sense; and the airy pageant, that glittered in empty space and rose in all the bliss of ignorance, flutters and sinks down to its native bogs! If the Irish orator riots in a studied neglect of his subject and a natural confusion of ideas, playing with words, ranging them into all sorts of fantastic combinations, because in the unlettered void or chaos of his mind there is no obstacle to their coalescing into any shapes they please, it must be confessed that the eloquence of the Scotch is encumbered with an excess of knowledge, that it cannot get on for a crowd of difficulties, that it staggers under a load of topics, that it is so environed in the forms of logic and rhetoric as to be equally precluded from originality or absurdity, from beauty or deformity. The plea of humanity is lost by going through the process of law; the firm and manly tone of principle is exchanged for the wavering and pitiful cant of policy; the living bursts of passion are reduced to a defunct *common-place;* and all true imagination is buried under the dust and rubbish of learned models and imposing authorities.

If the one is a bodiless phantom, the other is a lifeless skeleton: if the one in its feverish and hectic extravagance resembles a sick man's dream, the other is akin to the sleep of death—cold, stiff, unfeeling, monumental! Upon the whole, we despair less of the first than of the last, for the principle of life and motion is, after all, the primary condition of all genius. The luxuriant wildness

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of the one may be disciplined, and its excesses sobered down into reason; but the dry and rigid formality of the other can never burst the shell or husk of oratory. It is true that the one is disfigured by the puerilities and affectation of a Phillips; but then it is redeemed by the manly sense and fervour of a Plunket, the impassioned appeals and flashes of wit of a Curran, and by the golden tide of wisdom, eloquence and fancy, that flowed from the lips of a Burke. In the other, we do not sink so low in the negative series; but we get no higher in the ascending scale than a Mackintosh or a Brougham.[1] It may be suggested that the late Lord Erskine enjoyed a higher reputation as an orator than either of these: but he owed it to a dashing and graceful manner, to presence of mind, and to great animation in delivering his sentiments. Stripped of these outward and personal advantages, the matter of his speeches, like that of his writings, is nothing, or perfectly inert and dead.

Mr. Brougham is from the North of England; but he was educated in Edinburgh, and represents that school of politics and political economy in the House. He differs from Sir James Mackintosh in this, that he deals less in abstract principles, and more in individual details. He makes less use of general topics, and more of immediate facts. Sir James is better acquainted with the balance of an argument in old authors, Mr. Brougham with the balance of power in Europe. If the first is better versed in the progress of history, no man excels the last in a knowledge of the course of exchange. He is apprised of the exact state of our exports and imports, and scarce a ship clears out its cargo at Liverpool or Hull, but he has notice of the bill of lading. Our colonial policy, prison discipline, the state of the Hulks,

[1] Mr. Brougham is not a Scotchman literally, but by adoption.

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agricultural distress, commerce and manufactures, the Bullion question, the Catholic question, the Bourbons or the Inquisition, "domestic treason, foreign levy"—nothing can come amiss to him. He is at home in the crooked mazes of rotten boroughs, is not baffled by Scotch law, and can follow the meaning of one of Mr. Canning's speeches.

With so many resources, with such variety and solidity of information, Mr. Brougham is rather a powerful and alarming, than an effectual debater. In so many details (which he himself goes through with unwearied and unshrinking resolution) the spirit of the question is lost to others who have not the same voluntary power of attention or the same interest in hearing that he has in speaking; the original impulse that urged him forward is forgotten in so wide a field, in so interminable a career. If he can, others *cannot* carry all he knows in their heads at the same time; a rope of circumstantial evidence does not hold well together, nor drag the unwilling mind along with it (the willing mind hurries on before it, and grows impatient and absent). He moves in an unmanageable procession of facts and proofs, instead of coming to the point at once; and his premises (so anxious is he to proceed on sure and ample grounds) overlay and block up his conclusion, so that you cannot arrive at it, or not till the first fury and shock of the onset is over. The ball, from the too great width of the *calibre* from which it is sent, and from striking against such a number of hard, projecting points, is almost spent before it reaches its destination.

He keeps a ledger or a debtor-and-creditor account between the Government and the Country, posts so much actual crime, corruption and injustice against so much contingent advantage or sluggish prejudice, and at the bottom of the page brings in the balance of indignation

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and contempt, where it is due. But people are not to be *calculated into* contempt or indignation on abstract grounds; for however they may submit to this process where their own interests are concerned, in what regards the public good we believe they must see and feel instinctively, or not at all. There is (it is to be lamented) a good deal of froth as well as strength in the popular spirit, which will not admit of being *decanted* or served out in formal driblets; nor will spleen (the soul of Opposition) bear to be corked up in square patent bottles, and kept for future use! In a word, Mr. Brougham's is ticketed and labelled eloquence, registered and in numeros (like the successive parts of a Scotch Encyclopedia). It is clever, knowing, imposing, masterly: an extraordinary display of clearness of head, of quickness and energy of thought, of application and industry; but it is not the eloquence of the imagination or the heart, and will never save a nation or an individual from perdition.

Mr. Brougham has one considerable advantage in debate: he is overcome by no false modesty, no deference to others. But then, by a natural consequence or parity of reasoning, he has little sympathy with other people, and is liable to be mistaken in the effect his arguments will have upon them. He relies too much, among other things, on the patience of his hearers, and on his ability to turn everything to his own advantage. He accordingly goes to the full length of *his tether* (in vulgar phrase) and often overshoots the mark. *C'est dommage.* He has no reserve of discretion, no retentiveness of mind or check upon himself. He needs, with so much wit,

"As much again to govern it."

He cannot keep a good thing or a shrewd piece of in-

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formation in his possession, though the letting it out should mar a cause. It is not that he thinks too much of himself, too little of his cause; but he is absorbed in the pursuit of truth as an abstract inquiry. He is led away by the headstrong and over-mastering activity of his own mind. He is borne along almost involuntarily, and not impossibly against his better judgment, by the throng and restlessness of his ideas as by a crowd of people in motion.

His perceptions are literal, tenacious, *epileptic:* his understanding voracious of facts, and equally communicative of them—and he proceeds to

> "———— Pour out all as plain
> As downright Shippen or as old Montaigne"—

without either the virulence of the one or the *bonhommie* of the other. The repeated, smart, unforeseen discharges of the truth jar those that are next him. He does not dislike this state of irritation and collision, indulges his curiosity or his triumph, till, by calling for more facts or hazarding some extreme inference, he urges a question to the verge of a precipice, his adversaries urge it *over*, and he himself shrinks back from the consequence—

> "Scared at the sound himself has made!"

Mr. Brougham has great fearlessness, but not equal firmness; and after going too far on the *forlorn hope*, turns short round without due warning to others or respect for himself. He is adventurous, but easily panic-struck, and sacrifices the vanity of self-opinion to the necessity of self-preservation. He is too improvident for a leader, too petulant for a partisan, and does not sufficiently consult those with whom he is supposed to act in concert. He sometimes leaves them in the lurch, and is sometimes left in the lurch by them. He wants the

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principle of co-operation. He frequently, in a fit of thoughtless levity, gives an unexpected turn to the political machine, which alarms older and more experienced heads. If he was not himself the first to get out of harm's way and escape from the danger, it would be well! We hold indeed, as a general rule, that no man born or bred in Scotland can be a great orator, unless he is a mere quack, or a great statesman, unless he turns plain knave. The national gravity is against the first: the national caution is against the last.

To a Scotchman if a thing *is, it is;* there is an end of the question with his opinion about it. He is positive and abrupt, and is not in the habit of conciliating the feelings or soothing the follies of others. His only way therefore to produce a popular effect is to sail with the stream of prejudice, and to vent common dogmas, "the total grist, unsifted, husks and all," from some evangelical pulpit. This may answer, and it has answered. On the other hand, if a Scotchman, born or bred, comes to think at all of the feelings of others, it is not as they regard them, but as their opinion reacts on his own interest and safety. He is therefore either pragmatical and offensive, or if he tries to please, he becomes cowardly and fawning. His public spirit wants pliancy; his selfish compliances go all lengths. He is as impracticable as a popular partisan, as he is mischievous as a tool of Government. We do not wish to press this argument farther, and must leave it involved in some degree of obscurity, rather than bring the armed intellect of a whole nation on our heads.

Mr. Brougham speaks in a loud and unmitigated tone of voice, sometimes almost approaching to a scream. He is fluent, rapid, vehement, full of his subject, with evidently a great deal to say, and very regardless of the manner of saying it. As a lawyer, he has not hitherto

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been remarkably successful. He is not profound in cases and reports, nor does he take much interest in the peculiar features of a particular cause, or show much adroitness in the management of it. He carries too much weight of metal for ordinary and petty occasions: he must have a pretty large question to discuss, and must make *thorough-stitch* work of it. He, however, had an encounter with Mr. Phillips the other day, and shook all his tender blossoms, so that they fell to the ground, and withered in an hour; but they soon bloomed again! Mr. Brougham writes almost, if not quite, as well as he speaks. In the midst of an Election contest he comes out to address the populace, and goes back to his study to finish an article for the Edinburgh Review, sometimes indeed wedging three or four articles (in the shape of *rifaccimentos* of his own pamphlets or speeches in parliament) into a single number. Such indeed is the activity of his mind that it appears to require neither repose nor any other stimulus than a delight in its own exercise. He can turn his hand to anything, but he cannot be idle.

There are few intellectual accomplishments which he does not possess, and possess in a very high degree. He speaks French (and, we believe, several other modern languages) fluently, is a capital mathematician, and obtained an introduction to the celebrated Carnot in this latter character, when the conversation turned on squaring the circle, and not on the propriety of confining France within the natural boundary of the Rhine. Mr. Brougham is, in fact, a striking instance of the versatility and strength of the human mind, and also in one sense of the length of human life, if we make a good use of our time. There is room enough to crowd almost every art and science into it. If we pass "no day without a line," visit no place without the company of a

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book, we may with ease fill libraries or empty them of their contents. Those who complain of the shortness of life, let it slide by them without wishing to seize and make the most of its golden minutes. The more we do, the more we can do; the more busy we are, the more leisure we have. If any one possesses any advantage in a considerable degree, he may make himself master of nearly as many more as he pleases, by employing his spare time and cultivating the waste faculties of his mind. While one person is determining on the choice of a profession or study, another shall have made a fortune or gained a merited reputation. While one person is dreaming over the meaning of a word, another will have learned several languages.

It is not incapacity, but indolence, indecision, want of imagination, and a proneness to a sort of mental tautology, to repeat the same images and tread the same circle, that leaves us so poor, so dull and inert as we are, so naked of acquirement, so barren of resources! While we are walking backwards and forwards between Charing-Cross and Temple-Bar, and sitting in the same coffee-house every day, we might make the grand tour of Europe, and visit the Vatican and the Louvre. Mr. Brougham, among other means of strengthening and enlarging his views, has visited, we believe, most of the courts, and turned his attention to most of the Constitutions of the continent. He is, no doubt, a very accomplished, active-minded, and admirable person.

Sir Francis Burdett, in many respects, affords a contrast to the foregoing character. He is a plain, unaffected, unsophisticated English gentleman. He is a person of great reading too and considerable information; but he makes very little display of these, unless it be to quote Shakespear, which he does often with extreme

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aptness and felicity. Sir Francis is one of the most pleasing speakers in the House, and is a prodigious favourite of the English people. So he ought to be: for he is one of the few remaining examples of the old English understanding and old English character. All that he pretends to is common sense and common honesty; and a greater compliment cannot be paid to these than the attention with which he is listened to in the House of Commons. We cannot conceive a higher proof of courage than the saying things which he has been known to say there; and we have seen him blush and appear ashamed of the truths he has been obliged to utter, like a bashful novice. He could not have uttered what he often did there, if, besides his general respectability, he had not been a very honest, a very good-tempered, and a very good-looking man.

But there was evidently no wish to shine, nor any desire to offend. It was painful to him to hurt the feelings of those who heard him; but it was a higher duty in him not to suppress his sincere and earnest convictions. It is wonderful how much virtue and plain-dealing a man may be guilty of with impunity, if he has no vanity or ill-nature, or duplicity to provoke the contempt or resentment of others, and to made them impatient of the superiority he sets up over them. We do not recollect that Sir Francis ever endeavoured to atone for any occasional indiscretions or intemperance by giving the Duke of York credit for the battle of Waterloo, or congratulating Ministers on the confinement of Buonaparte at St. Helena. There is no honest cause which he dares not avow, no oppressed individual that he is not forward to succour. He has the firmness of manhood with the unimpaired enthusiasm of youthful feeling about him. His principles are mellowed and improved, without having become less sound with time:

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for at one period he sometimes appeared to come charged to the House with the petulance and caustic sententiousness he had imbibed at Wimbledon Common.

He is never violent or in extremes, except when the people or the parliament happen to be out of their senses; and then he seems to regret the necessity of plainly telling them he thinks so, instead of pluming himself upon it or exulting over impending calamities. There is only one error he seems to labour under (which, we believe, he also borrowed from Mr. Horne Tooke or Major Cartwright[1]) the wanting to go back to the early times of our Constitution and history in search of the principles of law and liberty. He might as well

"Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream."

Liberty, in our opinion, is but a modern invention (the growth of books and printing), and whether new or old, is not the less desirable. A man may be a patriot without being an antiquary. This is the only point on which Sir Francis is at all inclined to a tincture of pedantry. In general, his love of liberty is pure, as it is warm and steady: his humanity is unconstrained and free. His heart does not ask leave of his head to feel; nor does prudence always keep a guard upon his tongue or his pen. No man writes a better letter to his Constituents than the Member for Westminster; and his compositions of that kind ought to be good, for they have occasionally cost him dear. He is the idol of the people of Westminster: few persons have a greater number of friends and well-wishers; and he has still greater reason to be proud of his enemies, for his integrity and independence

[1] Major Cartwright used to bring in his Reform Bill every year, just as honourable members now bring in bills for marriage with deceased wives' sisters, &c. He was an Irishman, and Moore had a rather lame joke about the major's Reform *Pill*.—Ed.

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have made them so. Sir Francis Burdett has often been left in a Minority in the House of Commons, with only one or two on his side. We suspect, unfortunately for his country, that History will be found to enter its protest on the same side of the question!

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LORD ELDON

AND

MR. WILBERFORCE.

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LORD ELDON AND MR. WILBERFORCE.

LORD ELDON is an exceedingly good-natured man; but this does not prevent him, like other good-natured people, from consulting his own ease or interest. The character of *good-nature*, as it is called, has been a good deal mistaken; and the present Chancellor is not a bad illustration of the grounds of the prevailing error. When we happen to see an individual whose countenance is "all tranquillity and smiles," who is full of good-humour and pleasantry, whose manners are gentle and conciliating, who is uniformly temperate in his expressions, and punctual and just in his every-day dealings: we are apt to conclude from so fair an outside, that

> "All is conscience and tender heart"

within also, and that such a one would not hurt a fly. And neither would he without a motive. But mere good-nature (or what passes in the world for such) is often no better than indolent selfishness. A person distinguished and praised for this quality will not needlessly offend others, because they may retaliate; and, besides, it ruffles his own temper. He likes to enjoy a perfect calm, and to live in an interchange of kind offices. He suffers few things to irritate or annoy him. He has a fine oiliness in his disposition, which smooths the waves of passion as they rise. He does not enter into the quarrels or enmities of others, bears their ca-

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lamities with patience; he listens to the din and clang of war, the earthquake and the hurricane of the political and moral world with the temper and spirit of a philosopher; no act of injustice puts him beside himself; the follies and absurdities of mankind never give him a moment's uneasiness; he has none of the ordinary causes of fretfulness or chagrin that torment others from the undue interest they take in the conduct of their neighbours or in the public good.

None of these idle or frivolous sources of discontent, that make such havoc with the peace of human life, ever discompose his features or alter the serenity of his pulse. If a nation is robbed of its rights,

> "If wretches hang that Ministers may dine,"—

the laughing jest still collects in his eye, the cordial squeeze of the hand is still the same. But tread on the toe of one of these amiable and imperturbable mortals, or let a lump of soot fall down the chimney, and spoil their dinners, and see how they will bear it. All their patience is confined to the accidents that befal others: all their good-humour is to be resolved into giving themselves no concern about anything but their own ease and self-indulgence. Their charity begins and ends at home. Their being free from the common infirmities of temper is owing to their indifference to the common feelings of humanity; and if you touch the sore place, they betray more resentment, and break out (like spoiled children) into greater fractiousness than others, partly from a greater degree of selfishness, and partly because they are taken by surprise, and mad to think they have not guarded every point against annoyance or attack by a habit of callous insensibility and pampered indolence.

An instance of what we mean occurred but the other

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day. An allusion was made in the House of Commons to something in the proceedings in the Court of Chancery; and the Lord Chancellor comes to his place in the Court, with the statement[1] in his hand, fire[2] in his eyes, and a direct charge of falsehood in his mouth, without knowing anything certain of the matter, without making any inquiry into it, without using any precaution or putting the least restraint upon himself, and all on no better authority than a common newspaper report. The thing was (not that we are imputing any strong blame in this case, we merely bring it as an illustration) it touched himself, his office, the inviolability of his jurisdiction, the unexceptionableness of his proceedings; and the wet blanket of the Chancellor's temper instantly took fire like tinder! All the fine balancing was at an end; all the doubts, all the delicacy, all the candour real or affected, all the chances that there might be a mistake in the report, all the decencies to be observed towards a Member of the House, are overlooked by the blindness of passion; and the wary Judge pounces upon the paragraph without mercy, without a moment's delay, or the smallest attention to forms! This was indeed serious business; there was to be no trifling here; every instant was an age till the Chancellor had discharged his sense of indignation on the head of the indiscreet interloper on his authority.

Had it been another person's case, another person's dignity that had been compromised, another person's conduct that had been called in question, who doubts but that the matter might have stood over till the next term, that the Noble Lord would have taken the Newspaper home in his pocket, that he would have compared it carefully with other newspapers, that he would have

[1] *Newspaper*—autograph MS. [2] *Passion*—MS.

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written in the most mild and gentlemanly terms to the Honourable Member to inquire into the truth of the statement, that he would have watched a convenient opportunity good-humouredly to ask other Honourable Members what all this was about, that the greatest caution and fairness would have been observed, and that to this hour the lawyers' clerks and the junior counsel would have been in the greatest admiration of the Chancellor's nicety of discrimination and the utter inefficacy of the heats, importunities, haste, and passions of others to influence his judgment? This would have been true; yet his readiness to decide and to condemn, where he himself is concerned, shows that passion is not dead in him, nor subject to the control of reason; but that self-love is the mainspring that moves it, though on all beyond that limit he looks with the most perfect calmness and philosophic indifference.

> "Resistless passion sways us to the mood
> Of what it likes or loathes."

All people are passionate in what concerns themselves, or in what they take an interest in. The range of this last is different in different persons; but the want of passion is but another name for the want of sympathy and imagination.

The Lord Chancellor's impartiality and conscientious exactness are proverbial, and is, we believe, as inflexible as it is delicate in all cases that occur in the stated routine of legal practice. The impatience, the irritation, the hopes, the fears, the confident tone of the applicants move him not a jot from his intended course; he looks at their claims with the "lack-lustre eye" of professional indifference. Power and influence apart, his next strongest passion is to indulge in the exercise of professional learning and skill, to amuse himself with the dry details

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and intricate windings of the law of equity. He delights to balance a straw, to see a feather turn the scale, or make it even again, and divides and subdivides a scruple to the smallest fraction. He unravels the web of argument and pieces it together again, folds it up and lays it aside that he may examine it more at his leisure. He hugs indecision to his breast, and takes home a modest doubt or a nice point to solace himself with it in protracted, luxurious dalliance. Delay seems, in his mind, to be of the very essence of justice. He no more hurries through a question than if no one was waiting for the result, and he was merely a *dilettanti*, fanciful judge, who played at my Lord Chancellor, and busied himself with quibbles and punctilios as an idle hobby and harmless illusion.

The phlegm of the Chancellor's disposition gives one almost a surfeit of impartiality and candour; we are sick of the eternal poise of childish dilatoriness, and would wish law and justice to be decided at once by a cast of the dice (as they were in Rabelais) rather than be kept in frivolous and tormenting suspense. But there is a limit even to this extreme refinement and scrupulousness of the Chancellor. The understanding acts only in the absence of the passions. At the approach of the loadstone, the needle trembles, and points to it. The air of a political question has a wonderful tendency to brace and quicken the learned Lord's faculties. The breath of a court speedily oversets a thousand objections, and scatters the cobwebs of his brain. The secret wish of power is a thumping *make-weight*, where all is so nicely balanced beforehand. In the case of a celebrated beauty and heiress and the brother of a Noble Lord, the Chancellor hesitated long, and went through the forms, as usual: but who ever doubted, where all this indecision would end? No man in his senses for a single

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instant! We shall not press this point, which is rather a ticklish one. Some persons thought that from entertaining a fellow-feeling on the subject, the Chancellor would have been ready to favour the Poet-Laureat's application to the Court of Chancery for an injunction against Wat Tyler. His Lordship's sentiments on such points are not so variable; he has too much at stake. He recollected the year 1794, though Mr. Southey had forgotten it!

The personal always prevails over the intellectual, where the latter is not backed by strong feeling and principle. Where remote and speculative objects do not excite a predominant interest and passion, gross and immediate ones are sure to carry the day, even in ingenuous and well-disposed minds. The will yields necessarily to some motive or other; and where the public good or distant consequences excite no sympathy in the breast, either from short-sightedness or an easiness of temperament that shrinks from any violent effort or painful emotion, self-interest, indolence, the opinion of others, a desire to please, the sense of personal obligation, come in and fill up the void of public spirit, patriotism and humanity. The best men in the world in their own natural dispositions or in private life (for this reason) often become the most dangerous public characters, from their pliancy to the unruly passions of others and from their having no set-off in strong moral *stamina* to the temptations that are held out to them, if, as is frequently the case, they are men of versatile talent or patient industry.

Lord Eldon has one of the best-natured faces in the world; it is pleasant to meet him in the street, plodding along with an umbrella under his arm, without one trace of pride, of spleen, or discontent in his whole demeanour, void of offence, with almost rustic simplicity and

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honesty of appearance—a man that makes friends at first sight, and could hardly make enemies, if he would; and whose only fault is that he cannot say *Nay* to power, or subject himself to an unkind word or look from a King or a Minister. He is a thorough-bred Tory. Others boggle or are at fault in their career, or give back at a pinch; they split into different factions, have various objects to distract them, their private friendships or antipathies stand in their way; but he has never flinched, never gone back, never missed his way; he is an *out-and-outer* in this respect. His allegiance has been without flaw, like "one entire and perfect chrysolite," his implicit understanding is a kind of taffeta-lining to the Crown; his servility has assumed an air of the most determined independence, and he has

"Read his history in a Prince's eyes!"—

There has been no stretch of power attempted in his time that he has not seconded: no existing abuse so odious or so absurd, that he has not sanctioned it. He has gone the whole length of the most unpopular designs of Ministers. When the heavy artillery of interest, power, and prejudice is brought into the field, the paper pellets of the brain go for nothing: his labyrinth of nice, lady-like doubts explodes like a mine of gunpowder. The Chancellor may weigh and palter: the courtier is decided, the politician is firm, and riveted to his place in the Cabinet!

On all the great questions that have divided party opinion or agitated the public mind, the Chancellor has been found uniformly and without a single exception on the side of prerogative and power, and against every proposal for the advancement of freedom. He was a strenuous supporter of the wars and coalitions against the principles of liberty abroad; he has been equally

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zealous in urging or defending every act and infringement of the Constitution for abridging it at home. He at the same time opposes every amelioration of the penal laws, on the alleged ground of his abhorrence of even the shadow of innovation: he has studiously set his face against Catholic emancipation; he laboured hard in his vocation to prevent the abolition of the Slave Trade; he was Attorney-General in the trials for High Treason in 1794, and the other day, in giving his opinion on the Queen's Trial, shed tears and protested his innocence before God!

This was natural and to be expected; but on all occasions he is to be found at his post, true to the call of prejudice, of power, to the will of others and to his own interest. In the whole of his public career, and with all the goodness of his disposition, he has not shown "so small a drop of pity as a wren's eye." He seems to be on his guard against every thing liberal and humane as his weak side. Others relax in their obsequiousness either from satiety or disgust, or a hankering after popularity, or a wish to be thought above narrow prejudices. The Lord Chancellor alone is fixed and immovable. Is it want of understanding or of principle? No, it is want of imagination, a phlegmatic habit, an excess of false complaisance and good-nature. He signs a warrant in Council, devoting ten thousand men to an untimely death with steady nerves. Is it that he is cruel and unfeeling? No; but he thinks neither of their sufferings nor their cries; he sees only the gracious smile, the ready hand stretched out to thank him for his compliance with the dictates of rooted hate. He dooms a Continent to slavery. Is it that he is a tyrant or an enemy to the human race? No! but he cannot find in his heart to resist the commands or to give pain to a kind and generous benefactor.

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Common sense and justice are little better than vague terms to him; he acts upon his immediate feelings and least irksome impulses. The King's hand is velvet to the touch; the Woolsack is a seat of honour and profit! That is all he knows about the matter. As to abstract metaphysical calculations, the ox that stands staring at the corner of the street troubles his head as much about them as he does: yet this last is a very good sort of animal with no harm or malice in him, unless he is goaded on to mischief; and then it is necessary to keep out of his way, or warn others against him!

Mr. Wilberforce is a less perfect character in his way. He acts from mixed motives. He would willingly serve two masters, God and Mammon. He is a person of many excellent and admirable qualifications; but he has made a mistake in wishing to reconcile those that are incompatible. He has a most winning eloquence: specious, persuasive, familiar, silver-tongued: is amiable, charitable, conscientious, pious, loyal, humane, tractable to power, accessible to popularity, honouring the king, and no less charmed with the homage of his fellow-citizens. "What lacks he then?" Nothing but an economy of good parts. By aiming at too much, he has spoiled all, and neutralised what might have been an estimable character, distinguished by signal services to mankind. A man must take his choice not only between virtue and vice, but between different virtues. Otherwise, he will not gain his own approbation, or secure the respect of others. The graces and accomplishments of private life mar the man of business and the statesman.

There is a severity, a sternness, a self-denial, and a painful sense of duty required in the one, which ill-befits the softness and sweetness which should cha-

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racterise the other. Loyalty, patriotism, friendship, humanity, are all virtues; but may they not sometimes clash? By being unwilling to forego the praise due to any, we may forfeit the reputation of all, and instead of uniting the suffrages of the whole world in our favour, we may end in becoming a sort of by-word for affectation, cant, hollow professions, trimming, fickleness, and effeminate imbecility. It is best to choose and act up to some one leading character, as it is best to have some settled profession or regular pursuit in life.

We can readily believe that Mr. Wilberforce's first object and principle of action is to do what he thinks right: his next (and that we fear is of almost equal weight with the first) is to do what will be thought so by other people. He is always at a game of *hawk and buzzard* between these two; his "conscience will not budge," unless the world goes with it. He does not seem greatly to dread the denunciation in Scripture, but rather to court it—"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!" We suspect he is not quite easy in his mind, because West-India planters and Guinea traders do not join in his praise. His ears are not strongly enough tuned to drink in the execrations of the spoiler and the oppressor as the sweetest music. It is not enough that one half of the human species (the images of God carved in ebony, as old Fuller calls them) shout his name as a champion and a saviour through vast burning zones, and moisten their parched lips with the gush of gratitude for deliverance from chains: he must have a Prime-Minister drink his health at a Cabinet-dinner for aiding to rivet on those of his country and of Europe!

He goes hand and heart along with Government in all their notions of legitimacy and political aggrandizement, in the hope that they will leave him a sort of *no-*

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man's ground of humanity in the Great Desert, where his reputation for benevolence and public spirit may spring up and flourish, till its head touches the clouds, and it stretches out its branches to the farthest part of the earth. He has no mercy on those who claim a property in negro-slaves as so much live-stock on their estates; the country rings with the applause of his wit, his eloquence, and his indignant appeals to common sense and humanity on this subject. But not a word has he to say, not a whisper does he breathe, against the claim set up by the Despots of the Earth over their Continental subjects, but does everything in his power to confirm and sanction it! He must give no offence. Mr. Wilberforce's humanity will go all lengths that it can with safety and discretion; but it is not to be supposed that it should lose him his seat for Yorkshire, the smile of Majesty, or the countenance of the loyal and pious. He is anxious to do all the good he can without hurting himself or his fair fame.

His conscience and his character compound matters very amicably. He rather patronises honesty than is a martyr to it. His patriotism, his philanthropy are not so ill-bred, as to quarrel with his loyalty or to banish him from the first circles. He preaches vital Christianity to untutored savages, and tolerates its worst abuses in civilized states. He thus shews his respect for religion without offending the clergy, or circumscribing the sphere of his usefulness. There is in all this an appearance of a good deal of cant and tricking. His patriotism may be accused of being servile, his humanity ostentatious, his loyalty conditional, his religion a mixture of fashion and fanaticism. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship!" Mr. Wilberforce has the pride of being familiar with the great, the vanity of being popular, the

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conceit of an approving conscience. He is coy in his approaches to power; his public spirit is, in a manner, *under the rose.* He thus reaps the credit of independence without the obloquy, and secures the advantages of servility without incurring any obligations. He has two strings to his bow: he by no means neglects his worldly interests, while he expects a bright reversion in the skies.

Mr. Wilberforce is far from being a hypocrite; but he is, we think, as fine a specimen of *moral equivocation* as can well be conceived. A hypocrite is one who is the very reverse of, or who despises the character he pretends to be: Mr. Wilberforce would be all that he pretends to be, and he is it in fact, as far as words, plausible theories, good inclinations and easy services go, but not in heart and soul, or so as to give up the appearance of any one of his pretensions to preserve the reality of any other. He carefully chooses his ground to fight the battles of loyalty, religion and humanity; and it is such as is always safe and advantageous to himself! This is perhaps hardly fair, and it is of dangerous or doubtful tendency. Lord Eldon, for instance, is known to be a thorough-paced ministerialist: his opinion is only that of his party. But Mr. Wilberforce is not a party-man. He is the more looked up to on this account, but not with sufficient reason. By tampering with different temptations and personal projects, he has all the air of the most perfect independence, and gains a character for impartiality and candour, when he is only striking a balance in his mind between the *éclat* of differing from a Minister on some 'vantage ground and the risk or odium that may attend it. He carries all the weight of his artificial popularity over to the Government on vital points and hard-run questions; while they, in return, lend him a little of the gilding of court-favour to set

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off his disinterested philanthropy and tramontane enthusiasm.

As a leader or a follower, he makes an odd jumble of interests. By virtue of religious sympathy, he has brought the Saints over to the side of the abolition of Negro slavery. This his adversaries think hard and stealing a march upon them. What have the SAINTS to do with freedom or reform of any kind? Mr. Wilberforce's style of speaking is not quite *parliamentary;* it is halfway between that and *evangelical.* He is altogether a *double-entendre:* the very tone of his voice is a *double-entendre.* It winds and undulates, and glides up and down on texts of Scriptures and scraps from Paley, and trite sophistry, and pathetic appeals to his hearers in a faltering, inprogressive, side-long way, like those birds of weak wing, that are borne from their straightforward course

"By every little breath that under heaven is blown."

Something of this fluctuating, time-serving principle was visible even in the great question of the Abolition of the Slave Trade. He was, at one time, half inclined to surrender it into Mr. Pitt's dilatory hands, and seemed to think the gloss of novelty was gone from it, and the gaudy colouring of popularity sunk into the *sable* ground from which it rose! It was, however, persisted in and carried to a triumphant conclusion.

Mr. Wilberforce said too little on this occasion of one, compared with whom he was but the frontispiece to that great chapter in the history of the world—the mask, the varnishing and painting. The man that effected it by Herculean labours of body and equally gigantic labours of mind was Clarkson, the true Apostle of human Redemption on that occasion, and who, it is remarkable, resembles in his person and lineaments more than one

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of the Apostles in the *Cartoons* of Raphael. He deserves to be added to the Twelve![1]

[1] After all, the best as well as most amusing comment on the character just described was that made by Sheridan who, being picked up in no very creditable plight by the watch, and asked rather roughly who he was, made answer—"I am Mr. Wilberforce!" The guardians of the night conducted him home with all the honours due to Grace and Nature.

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MR. COBBETT.

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MR. COBBETT.[1]

PEOPLE have about as substantial an idea of Cobbett as they have of Cribb. His blows are as hard, and he himself is as impenetrable. One has no notion of him as making use of a fine pen, but a great mutton-fist; his style stuns his readers, and he "filips the ear of the public with a three-man beetle." He is too much for any single newspaper antagonist, "lays waste" a city orator or Member of Parliament, and bears hard upon the Government itself. He is a kind of *fourth estate* in the politics of the country.

He is not only unquestionably the most powerful political writer of the present day, but one of the best writers in the language. He speaks and thinks plain, broad, downright English. He might be said to have the clearness of Swift, the naturalness of Defoe, and the picturesque satirical description of Mandeville: if all such comparisons were not impertinent. A really great and original writer is like nobody but himself. In one sense, Sterne was not a wit, nor Shakespear a poet. It is easy to describe second-rate talents, because they fall into a class and enlist under a standard: but first-rate powers defy calculation or comparison, and can be defined only by themselves. They are *sui generis*, and make the class to which they belong. I have tried half-a-dozen times to describe Burke's style without ever succeeding: its severe extravagance, its literal boldness,

[1] First printed in the second edition.—Ed.

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its matter-of-fact hyperboles, its running away with a subject and from it at the same time; but there is no making it out, for there is no example of the same thing any where else. We have no common measure to refer to; and his qualities contradict even themselves.

Cobbett is not so difficult. He has been compared to Paine; and so far it is true there are no two writers who come more into juxtaposition from the nature of their subjects, from the internal resources on which they draw, and from the popular effect of their writings and their adaptation (though that is a bad word in the present case) to the capacity of every reader. But still, if we turn to a volume of Paine's (his Common Sense or Rights of Man) we are struck (not to say somewhat refreshed) by the difference. Paine is a much more sententious writer than Cobbett. You cannot open a page in any of his best and earlier works without meeting with some maxim, some antithetical and memorable saying, which is a sort of starting-place for the argument, and the goal to which it returns.

There is not a single *bon-mot*, a single sentence in Cobbett that has ever been quoted again. If any thing is ever quoted from him, it is an epithet of abuse or a nickname. He is an excellent hand at invention in that way, and has "damnable iteration in him." What could be better than his pestering Erskine year after year with his second title of Baron Clackmannan? He is rather too fond of such phrases as *the Sons and Daughters of Corruption.* Paine affected to reduce things to first principles, to announce self-evident truths. Cobbett troubles himself about little but the details and local circumstances. The first appeared to have made up his mind beforehand to certain opinions, and to try to find the most compendious and pointed expressions for them: his successor appears to have no clue, no fixed or

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leading principles, nor ever to have thought on a question till he sits down to write about it. But then there seems no end of his matters of fact and raw materials, which are brought out in all their strength and sharpness from not having been squared or frittered down or vamped up to suit a theory. He goes on with his descriptions and illustrations as if he would never come to a stop; they have all the force of novelty with all the familiarity of old acquaintance. His knowledge grows out of the subject; and his style is that of a man who has an absolute intuition of what he is talking about, and never thinks of any thing else. He deals in premises and speaks to evidence: the coming to a conclusion and summing up (which was Paine's *forte*) lies in a smaller compass. The one could not compose an elementary treatise on politics to become a manual for the popular reader; nor could the other in all probability have kept up a weekly journal[1] for the same number of years with the same spirit, interest and untired perseverance. Paine's writings are a sort of introduction to political arithmetic on a new plan; Cobbett keeps a day-book, and makes an entry at full of all the occurrences and troublesome questions that start up throughout the year.

Cobbett with vast industry, vast information and the utmost power of making what he says intelligible, never seems to get at the beginning or come to the end of any question: Paine in a few short sentences seems by his peremptory manner "to clear it from all controversy, past, present and to come." Paine takes a bird's-eye view of things; Cobbett sticks close to them, inspects the component parts, and keeps fast hold of the smallest advantages they afford him. Or, if I might here be indulged in a pastoral allusion, Paine tries to enclose his ideas in a fold for security and repose; Cobbett lets *his*

[1] The Weekly Political Register.

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pour out upon the plain like a flock of sheep to feed and batten. Cobbett is a pleasanter writer for those to read who do not agree with him; for he is less dogmatical, goes more into the common grounds of fact and argument to which all appeal, is more desultory and various, and appears less to be driving at a previous conclusion than urged on by the force of present conviction. He is therefore tolerated by all parties, though he has made himself by turns obnoxious to all; and even those he abuses read him. The Reformers read him when he was a Tory, and the Tories read him now that he is a Reformer. He must, I think, however, be *caviare* to the Whigs.[1]

If he is less metaphysical and poetical than his celebrated prototype, he is more picturesque and dramatic. His episodes, which are numerous as they are pertinent, are striking, interesting, full of life and *naïveté*, minute, double measure running over, but never tedious—*nunquam sufflaminandus erat.* He is one of those writers who can never tire us, not even of himself; and the reason is, he is always "full of matter." He never runs to lees, never gives us the vapid leavings of himself, is never "weary, stale, and unprofitable," but always setting out afresh on his journey, clearing away some old nuisance, and turning up new mould. His egotism is delightful, for there is no affectation in it. He does not talk of himself for lack of something to write about, but because some circumstance that has happened to himself is the best possible illustration of the subject; and he is not the man to shrink from giving the best possible illustration of the subject from a squeamish delicacy. He likes both himself and his subject too well. He does not put himself before it, and say "admire me

[1] Lord Chancellor Thurlow used to say that Cobbett was the only writer that deserved the name of a political reasoner.

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first," but places us in the same situation with himself, and makes us see all that he does. There is no blind-man's buff, no conscious hints, no awkward ventriloquism, no testimonies of applause, no abstract, senseless self-complacency, no smuggled admiration of his own person by proxy. It is all plain and above-board.

He writes himself plain William Cobbett, strips himself quite as naked as any body could wish: in a word, his egotism is full of individuality, and has room for very little vanity in it. We feel delighted, rub our hands, and draw our chair to the fire, when we come to a passage of this sort: we know it will be something new and good, manly and simple, not the same insipid story of self over again. We sit down at table with the writer, but it is of a course of rich viands—flesh, fish, and wild fowl—and not to a nominal entertainment, like that given by the Barmecide in the Arabian Nights, who put off his visitor with calling for a number of exquisite things that never appeared and with the honour of his company. Mr. Cobbett is not a *make-believe* writer. His worst enemy cannot say that of him. Still less is he a vulgar one. He must be a puny commonplace critic indeed, who thinks him so. How fine were the graphical descriptions he sent us from America: what a transatlantic flavour, what a native *gusto*, what a fine *sauce piquante* of contempt they were seasoned with! If he had sat down to look at himself in the glass, instead of looking about him like Adam in Paradise, he would not have got up these articles in so capital a style. What a noble account of his first breakfast after his arrival in America! It might serve for a month. There is no scene on the stage more amusing.

How well he paints the gold and scarlet plumage of the American birds, only to lament more pathetically the want of the wild wood-notes of his native land!

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The groves of the Ohio that had just fallen beneath the axe's stroke, "live in his description," and the turnips that he transplanted from Botley "look green" in prose! How well at another time he describes the poor sheep that had got the tick, and had tumbled down in the agonies of death! It is a portrait in the manner of Bewick, with the strength, the simplicity, and feeling of that great naturalist. What havoc he makes, when he pleases, of the curls of Dr. Parr's wig and of the Whig consistency of Mr. ———! His Grammar, too, is as entertaining as a story-book. He is too hard, however, upon the style of others, and not enough (sometimes) on his own.

As a political partisan, no one can stand against him. With his brandished club, like Giant Despair in the Pilgrim's Progress, he knocks out their brains: and not only no individual, but no corrupt system, could hold out against his powerful and repeated attacks. But with the same weapon swung round like a flail, with which he levels his antagonists, he lays his friends low, and puts his own party *hors de combat*. This is a bad propensity and a worse principle in political tactics, though a common one. If his blows were straightforward and steadily directed to the same object, no unpopular minister could live before him; instead of which he lays about right and left impartially and remorselessly, makes a clear stage, has all the ring to himself, and then runs out of it, just when he should stand his ground. He throws his head into his adversary's stomach, and takes away from him all inclination for the fight, hits fair or foul, strikes at every thing, and as you come up to his aid or stand ready to pursue his advantage, trips up your heels or lays you sprawling, and pummels you when down as much to his heart's content as ever the Yanguesian carriers belaboured Rosinante with their pack-staves. "*He has the back-trick simply the best of any man in Illyria.*"

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He pays off both scores of old friendship and new-acquired enmity in a breath, in one perpetual volley, one raking fire of "arrowy sleet" shot from his pen. However his own reputation or the cause may suffer in consequence, he cares not one pin about that, so that he disables all who oppose or who pretend to help him. In fact, he cannot bear success of any kind, not even of his own views or party; and if any principle were likely to become popular, would turn round against it, to show his power in shouldering it on one side. In short, wherever power is, there is he against it: he naturally butts at all obstacles, as unicorns are attracted to oak-trees, and feels his own strength only by resistance to the opinions and wishes of the rest of the world. To sail with the stream, to agree with the company, is not his humour. If he could bring about a Reform in Parliament, the odds are that he would instantly fall foul of and try to mar his own handy-work; and he quarrels with his own creatures as soon as he has written them into a little vogue—and a prison. I do not think this is vanity or fickleness so much as a pugnacious disposition, that must have an antagonist power to contend with, and only finds itself at ease in systematic opposition. If it were not for this, the high towers and rotten places of the world would fall before the battering-ram of his hard-headed reasoning: but if he once found them tottering, he would apply his strength to prop them up, and disappoint the expectations of his followers. He cannot agree to any thing established, nor to set up any thing else in its stead. While it is established, he presses hard against it, because it presses upon him, at least in imagination. Let it crumble under his grasp, and the motive to resistance is gone. He then requires some other grievance to set his face against.

His principle is repulsion, his nature contradiction: he is made up of mere antipathies; an Ishmaelite indeed

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without a fellow. He is always playing at *hunt-the-slipper* in politics. He turns round upon whoever is next to him. The way to wean him from any opinion, and make him conceive an intolerable hatred against it, would be to place somebody near him who was perpetually dinning it in his ears. When he is in England, he does nothing but abuse the Boroughmongers, and laugh at the whole system: when he is in America, he grows impatient of freedom and a republic. If he had stayed there a little longer, he would have become a loyal and a loving subject of his Majesty King George IV. He lampooned the French Revolution when it was hailed as the dawn of liberty by millions; by the time it was brought into almost universal ill-odour by some means or other (partly no doubt by himself) he had turned, with one or two or three others, staunch Bonapartist. He is always of the militant, not of the triumphant party: so far he bears a gallant show of magnanimity. But his gallantry is hardly of the right stamp: it wants principle. For though he is not servile or mercenary, he is the victim of self-will. He must pull down and pull in pieces: it is not in his disposition to do otherwise. It is a pity; for with his great talents he might do great things, if he would go right forward to any useful object, make thorough-stitch work of any question, or join hand and heart with any principle. He changes his opinions as he does his friends, and much on the same account. He has no comfort in fixed principles: as soon as any thing is settled in his own mind, he quarrels with it. He has no satisfaction but in the chase after truth, runs a question down, worries and kills it, then quits it like vermin, and starts some new game, to lead him a new dance, and give him a fresh breathing through bog and brake, with the rabble yelping at his heels and the leaders perpetually at fault.

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This he calls sport-royal. He thinks it as good as cudgel-playing or single-stick, or any thing else that has life in it. He likes the cut and thrust, the falls, bruises and dry blows of an argument: as to any good or useful results that may come of the amicable settling of it, any one is welcome to them for him. The amusement is over, when the matter is once fairly decided.

There is another point of view in which this may be put. I might say that Mr. Cobbett is a very honest man with a total want of principle; and I might explain this paradox thus. I mean that he is, I think, in downright earnest in what he says, in the part he takes at the time; but, in taking that part, he is led entirely by headstrong obstinacy, caprice, novelty, pique or personal motive of some sort, and not by a steadfast regard for truth or habitual anxiety for what is right uppermost in his mind. He is not a feed, time-serving, shuffling advocate (no man could write as he does who did not believe himself sincere); but his understanding is the dupe and slave of his momentary, violent and irritable humours. He does not adopt an opinion "deliberately or for money;" yet his conscience is at the mercy of the first provocation he receives, of the first whim he takes in his head. He sees things through the medium of heat and passion, not with reference to any general principles; and his whole system of thinking is deranged by the first object that strikes his fancy or sours his temper.

One cause of this phenomenon is perhaps his want of a regular education. He is a self-taught man, and has the faults as well as excellences of that class of persons in their most striking and glaring excess. It must be acknowledged that the Editor of the Political Register (the *two-penny trash*, as it was called, till a Bill passed the House to raise the price to sixpence) is not "the gentleman and scholar," though he has qualities that,

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with a little better management, would be worth (to the public) both those titles. For want of knowing what has been discovered before him, he has not certain general landmarks to refer to or a general standard of thought to apply to individual cases. He relies on his own acuteness and the immediate evidence, without being acquainted with the comparative anatomy or philosophical structure of opinion. He does not view things on a large scale or at the horizon (dim and airy enough perhaps); but as they affect himself—close, palpable, tangible. Whatever he finds out is his own, and he only knows what he finds out. He is in the constant hurry and fever of gestation: his brain teems incessantly with some fresh project. Every new light is the birth of a new system, the dawn of a new world to him. He is continually outstripping and overreaching himself. The last opinion is the only true one. He is wiser to-day than he was yesterday. Why should he not be wiser to-morrow than he was to-day?

Men of a learned education are not so sharp-witted as clever men without it; but they know the balance of the human intellect better. If they are more stupid, they are more steady, and are less liable to be led astray by their own sagacity and the overweening petulance of hard-earned and late-acquired wisdom. They do not fall in love with every meretricious extravagance at first sight, or mistake an old battered hypothesis for a vestal, because they are new to the ways of this old world. They do not seize upon it as a prize, but are safe from gross imposition by being as wise and no wiser than those who went before them.

Paine said on some occasion, "What I have written, I have written," as rendering any farther declaration of his principles unnecessary. Not so Mr. Cobbett. What he has written is no rule to him what he is to write. He

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learns something every day, and every week he takes the field to maintain the opinions of the last six days against friend or foe. I doubt whether this outrageous inconsistency, this headstrong fickleness, this understood want of all rule and method, does not enable him to go on with the spirit, vigour and variety that he does. He is not pledged to repeat himself. Every new Register is a kind of new Prospectus. He blesses himself from all ties and shackles on his understanding; he has no mortgages on his brain; his notions are free and unincumbered. If he was put in trammels, he might become a vile hack like so many more. But he gives himself "ample scope and verge enough." He takes both sides of a question, and maintains one as sturdily as the other. If nobody else can argue against him, he is a very good match for himself. He writes better in favour of reform than any body else; he used to write better against it. Wherever he is, there is the tug of war, the weight of the argument, the strength of abuse.

He is not like a man in danger of being *bed-rid* in his faculties: he tosses and tumbles about his unwieldy bulk, and when he is tired of lying on one side, relieves himself by turning on the other. His shifting his point of view from time to time not merely adds variety and greater compass to his topics (so that the Political Register is an armoury and magazine for all the materials and weapons of political warfare): but it gives a greater zest and liveliness to his manner of treating them. Mr. Cobbett takes nothing for granted, as what he has proved before; he does not write a book of reference. We see his ideas in their first concoction, fermenting and overflowing with the ebullitions of a lively conception. We look on at the actual process, and are put in immediate possession of the grounds and materials on which he forms his sanguine, unsettled conclusions. He does not

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give us samples of reasoning, but the whole solid mass, refuse and all.

> ——— "He pours out all as plain
> As downright Shippen or as old Montaigne."

This is one cause of the clearness and force of his writings. An argument does not stop to stagnate and muddle in his brain, but passes at once to his paper. His ideas are served up, like pancakes, hot and hot.

Fresh theories give him fresh courage. He is like a young and lusty bridegroom, that divorces a favourite speculation every morning, and marries a new one every night. He is not wedded to his notions, not he. He has not one Mrs. Cobbett among all his opinions. He makes the most of the last thought that has come in his way, seizes fast hold of it, rumples it about in all directions with rough strong hands, has his wicked will of it, takes a surfeit, and throws it away. Our author's changing his opinions for new ones is not so wonderful; what is more remarkable is his felicity in forgetting his old ones. He does not pretend to consistency (like Mr. Coleridge); he frankly disavows all connection with himself. He feels no personal responsibility in this way, and cuts a friend or principle with the same decided indifference that Antipholis of Ephesus cuts Ægeon of Syracuse. It is a hollow thing. The only time he ever grew romantic was in bringing over the relics of Mr. Thomas Paine with him from America, to go a progress with them through the disaffected districts. Scarce had he landed in Liverpool, when he left the bones of a great man to shift for themselves; and no sooner did he arrive in London, than he made a speech to disclaim all participation in the political and theological sentiments of his late idol, and to place the whole stock of his admiration and enthusiasm towards him to the account of

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his financial speculations, and of his having predicted the fate of paper-money.

If he had erected a little gold statue to him, it might have proved the sincerity of this assertion; but to make a martyr and a patron-saint of a man, and to dig up "his canonized bones" in order to expose them as objects of devotion to the rabble's gaze, asks something that has more life and spirit in it, more mind and vivifying soul, than has to do with any calculation of pounds, shillings and pence! The fact is, he *ratted* from his own project. He found the thing not so ripe as he had expected. His heart failed him; his enthusiasm fled; and he made his retraction. His admiration is short-lived: his contempt only is rooted, and his resentment lasting. The above was only one instance of his building too much on practical *data*. He has an ill habit of prophesying, and goes on, though still deceived. The art of prophesying does not suit Mr. Cobbett's style. He has a knack of fixing names and times and places. According to him, the Reformed Parliament was to meet in March, 1818; it did not, and we heard no more of the matter. When his predictions fail, he takes no farther notice of them, but applies himself to new ones, like the country-people, who turn to see what weather there is in the almanac for the next week, though it has been out in its reckoning every day of the last.

Mr. Cobbett is great in attack, not in defence: he cannot fight an up-hill battle. He will not bear the least punishing. If any one turns upon him (which few people like to do), he immediately turns tail. Like an overgrown school-boy, he is so used to have it all his own way, that he cannot submit to any thing like competition or a struggle for the mastery: he must lay on all the blows, and take none. He is bullying and cowardly; a Big Ben in politics, who will fall upon others and

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crush them by his weight, but is not prepared for resistance, and is soon staggered by a few smart blows. Whenever he has been set upon, he has slunk out of the controversy. The Edinburgh Review made (what is called) a dead set at him some years ago, to which he only retorted by an eulogy on the superior neatness of an English kitchen-garden to a Scotch one. I remember going one day into a bookseller's shop in Fleet-street to ask for the Review; and on my expressing my opinion to a young Scotchman, who stood behind the counter, that Mr. Cobbett might hit as hard in his reply, the North Briton said with some alarm—"But you don't think, Sir, Mr. Cobbett will be able to injure the Scottish nation?". I said I could not speak to that point, but I thought he was very well able to defend himself. He however did not, but has borne a grudge to the Edinburgh Review ever since, which he hates worse than the Quarterly. I cannot say I do.

Mr. Cobbett speaks almost as well as he writes. The only time I ever saw him he seemed to me a very pleasant man: easy of access, affable, clear-headed, simple and mild in his manner, deliberate and unruffled in his speech, though some of his expressions were not very qualified. His figure is tall and portly: he has a good sensible face, rather full, with little grey eyes, a hard, square forehead, a ruddy complexion, with hair grey or powdered: and had on a scarlet broad-cloth waistcoat, with the flaps of the pockets hanging down, as was the custom for gentlemen-farmers in the last century, or as we see it in the pictures of Members of Parliament in the reign of George I. I certainly did not think less favourably of him for seeing him.

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MR. CAMPBELL AND MR. CRABBE.

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MR. CAMPBELL AND MR. CRABBE.

MR. CAMPBELL may be said to hold a place (among modern poets) between Lord Byron and Mr. Rogers. With much of the glossy splendour, the pointed vigour and romantic interest of the one, he possesses the fastidious refinement, the classic elegance of the other. Mr. Rogers, as a writer, is too effeminate, Lord Byron too extravagant: Mr. Campbell is neither. The author of the *Pleasures of Memory* polishes his lines till they sparkle with the most exquisite finish; he attenuates them into the utmost degree of trembling softness: but we may complain, in spite of the delicacy and brilliancy of the execution, of a want of strength and solidity. The author of the *Pleasures of Hope*, with a richer and deeper vein of thought and imagination, works it out into figures of equal grace and dazzling beauty, avoiding on the one hand the tinsel of flimsy affectation, and on the other the vices of a rude and barbarous negligence. His Pegasus is not a rough, skittish colt, running wild among the mountains, covered with bur-docks and thistles, nor a tame, sleek pad, unable to get out of the same ambling pace; but a beautiful *manège*-horse, full of life and spirit in itself, and subject to the complete control of the rider. Mr. Campbell gives scope to his feelings and his fancy, and embodies them in a noble and naturally interesting subject; and he at the same time conceives himself called upon (in

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these days of critical nicety) to pay the exactest attention to the expression of each thought, and to modulate each line into the most faultless harmony. The character of his mind is a lofty and self-scrutinizing ambition, that strives to reconcile the integrity of general design with the perfect elaboration of each component part, that aims at striking effect, but is jealous of the means by which this is to be produced.

Our poet is not averse to popularity (nay, he is tremblingly alive to it); but self-respect is the primary law, the indispensable condition on which it must be obtained. We should dread to point out (even if we could) a false concord, a mixed metaphor, an imperfect rhyme, in any of Mr. Campbell's productions; for we think that all his fame would hardly compensate to him for the discovery. He seeks for perfection, and nothing evidently short of it can satisfy his mind. He is a *high finisher* in poetry, whose every work must bear inspection, whose slightest touch is precious: not a coarse dauber, who is contented to impose on public wonder and credulity by some huge, ill-executed design, or who endeavours to wear out patience and opposition together by a load of lumbering, feeble, awkward, improgressive lines. On the contrary, Mr. Campbell labours to lend every grace of execution to his subject, while he borrows his ardour and inspiration from it, and to deserve the laurels he has earned by true genius and by true pains. There is an apparent consciousness of this in most of his writings. He has attained to great excellence by aiming at the greatest, by a cautious and yet daring selection of topics, and by studiously (and with a religious horror) avoiding all those faults which arise from grossness, vulgarity, haste, and disregard of public opinion.

He seizes on the highest point of eminence, and strives to keep it to himself; he "snatches a grace beyond the

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reach of art," and will not let it go; he steeps a single thought or image so deep in the Tyrian dyes of a gorgeous imagination, that it throws its lustre over a whole page. Every where vivid *ideal* forms hover (in intense conception) over the poet's verse, which ascends, like the aloe, to the clouds with pure flowers at its top. Or, to take an humbler comparison (the pride of genius must sometimes stoop to the lowliness of criticism), Mr. Campbell's poetry often reminds us of the purple gilliflower, both for its colour and its scent, its glowing warmth, its rich, languid, sullen hue,

> "Yet sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath!"

There are those who complain of the little that Mr. Campbell has done in poetry, and who seem to insinuate that he is deterred by his own reputation from making any farther or higher attempts. But after having produced two poems that have gone to the heart of a nation, and are gifts to a world, he may surely linger out the rest of his life in a dream of immortality. There are moments in our lives so exquisite that all that remains of them afterwards seems useless and barren; and there are lines and stanzas in our author's early writings in which he may be thought to have exhausted all the sweetness and all the essence of poetry, so that nothing farther was left to his efforts or his ambition. Happy is it for those few and fortunate worshippers of the Muse (not a subject of grudging or envy to others), who already enjoy in their life-time a foretaste of their future fame, who see their names accompanying them, like a cloud of glory, from youth to age,

> "And by the vision splendid
> Are on their way attended"—

and who know that they have built a shrine for the

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thoughts and feelings that were most dear to them in the minds and memories of other men, till the language which they lisped in childhood is forgotten, or the human heart shall beat no more!

The *Pleasures of Hope* alone would not have called forth these remarks from us; but there are passages in the *Gertrude of Wyoming* of so rare and ripe a beauty, that they challenge, as they exceed all praise. Such, for instance, is the following peerless description of Gertrude's childhood:—

"A loved bequest,—and I may half impart
To those that feel the strong paternal tie,
How like a new existence to his heart
That living flow'r uprose beneath his eye,
Dear as she was from cherub infancy,
From hours when she would round his garden play,
To time when as the rip'ning years went by,
Her lovely mind could culture well repay,
And more engaging grew, from pleasing day to day.

"I may not paint those thousand infant charms;
(Unconscious fascination, undesign'd!)
The orison repeated in his arms,
For God to bless her sire and all mankind;
The book, the bosom on his knee reclined,
Or how sweet fairy-lore he heard her con,
(The playmate ere the teacher of her mind):
All uncompanion'd else her heart had gone
'Till now, in Gertrude's eyes, their ninth blue summer shone.

"And summer was the tide, and sweet the hour,
When sire and daughter saw, with fleet descent,
An Indian from his bark approach their bow'r,
Of buskin'd limb and swarthy lineament;
The red wild feathers on his brow were blent,
And bracelets bound the arm that help'd to light
A boy, who seem'd, as he beside him went,
Of Christian vesture and complexion bright,
Led by his dusky guide, like morning brought by night."

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In the foregoing stanzas we particularly admire the line—

"'Till now, in Gertrude's eyes, their ninth blue summer shone."

It appears to us like the ecstatic union of natural beauty and poetic fancy, and in its playful sublimity resembles the azure canopy mirrored in the smiling waters: bright, liquid, serene, heavenly! A great outcry, we know, has prevailed for some time past against poetic diction and affected conceits, and, to a certain degree, we go along with it; but this must not prevent us from feeling the thrill of pleasure when we see beauty linked to beauty, like kindred flame to flame, or from applauding the voluptuous fancy that raises and adorns the fairy fabric of thought, that nature has begun! Pleasure is "scattered in stray-gifts o'er the earth"; beauty streaks the "famous poet's page" in occasional lines of inconceivable brightness; and wherever this is the case, no splenetic censures or "jealous leer malign," no idle theories or cold indifference should hinder us from greeting it with rapture. There are other parts of this poem equally delightful, in which there is a light startling as the red-bird's wing, a perfume like that of the magnolia, a music like the murmuring of pathless woods or of the everlasting ocean.

We conceive, however, that Mr. Campbell excels chiefly in sentiment and imagery. The story moves slow, and is mechanically conducted, and rather resembles a Scotch canal carried over lengthened aqueducts and with a number of *locks* in it, than one of those rivers that sweep in their majestic course, broad and full, over Transatlantic plains, and lose themselves in rolling gulfs, or thunder down lofty precipices. But in the centre, the inmost recesses of our poet's heart, the pearly dew of sensibility is distilled and collects, like

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the diamond in the mine; and the structure of his fame rests on the crystal columns of a polished imagination. We prefer the *Gertrude* to the *Pleasures of Hope*, because with perhaps less brilliancy there is more of tenderness and natural imagery in the former. In the *Pleasures of Hope* Mr. Campbell had not completely emancipated himself from the trammels of the more artificial style of poetry, from epigram, and antithesis and hyperbole. The best line in it, in which earthly joys are said to be—

"Like angels' visits, few and far between"—

is a borrowed one.[1] But in the *Gertrude of Wyoming* "we perceive a softness coming over the heart of the author, and the scales and crust of formality, that fence in his couplets and give them a somewhat glittering and rigid appearance, fall off;" and he has succeeded in engrafting the wild and more expansive interest of the romantic school of poetry on classic elegance and precision. After the poem we have just named, Mr. Campbell's SONGS are the happiest efforts of his Muse: breathing freshness, blushing like the morn, they seem, like clustering roses, to weave a chaplet for love and liberty; or their bleeding words gush out in mournful and hurried succession, like "ruddy drops that visit the sad heart" of thoughtful Humanity. The *Battle of Hohen linden* is of all modern compositions the most lyrical in spirit and in sound. To justify this encomium, we need only recall the lines to the reader's memory.

"On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay th' untrodden snow,
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

[1] "Like angels' visits, short and far between"—
Blair's *Grave*.

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But Linden saw another sight,
When the drum beat at dead of night,
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast array'd,
Each horseman drew his battle blade,
And furious every charger neigh'd,
To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills with thunder riv'n,
Then rush'd the steed to battle driv'n,
And louder than the bolts of heav'n
Far flash'd the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow
On Linden's hills of stained snow,
And bloodier yet the torrent flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

'Tis morn, but scarce yon level sun
Can pierce the war-clouds, rolling [1] dun,
Where furious Frank and fiery Hun
Shout in their sulph'rous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye brave,
Who rush to glory, or the grave!
Wave, Munich! all thy banners wave!
And charge with all thy chivalry!

Few, few shall part, where many meet!
The snow shall be their winding-sheet,
And every turf beneath their feet
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

Mr. Campbell's prose-criticisms on contemporary and other poets (which have appeared in the New Monthly Magazine) are in a style at once chaste, temperate, guarded, and just.

Mr. Crabbe presents an entire contrast to Mr. Camp-

[1] Is not this word, which occurs in the last line but one, (as well as before) an instance of that repetition, which we so often meet with in the most correct and elegant writers ?

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bell. The one is the most ambitious and aspiring of living poets, the other the most humble and prosaic. If the poetry of the one is like the arch of the rainbow, spanning and adorning the earth, that of the other is like a dull, leaden cloud hanging over it. Mr. Crabbe's style might be cited as an answer to Audrey's question "Is poetry a true thing?" There are here no ornaments, no flights of fancy, no illusions of sentiment, no tinsel of words. His song is one sad reality, one unraised, unvaried note of unavailing woe. Literal fidelity serves him in the place of invention; he assumes importance by a number of petty details; he rivets attention by being tedious. He not only deals in incessant matters of fact, but in matters of fact of the most familiar, the least animating, and the most unpleasant kind. But he relies for the effect of novelty on the microscopic minuteness with which he dissects the most trivial objects, and for the interest he excites, on the unshrinking determination with which he handles the most painful.

His poetry has an official and professional air. He is called in to cases of difficult births, of fractured limbs or breaches of the peace, and makes out a parochial list of accidents and offences. He takes the most trite, the most gross and obvious, and revolting part of nature, for the subject of his elaborate descriptions; but it is Nature still, and Nature is a great and mighty Goddess! It is well for the Reverend Author that it is so. Individuality is, in his theory, the only definition of poetry. Whatever *is*, he hitches into rhyme. Whoever makes an exact image of any thing on the earth, however deformed or insignificant, according to him, must succeed; and he himself has succeeded.

Mr. Crabbe is one of the most popular and admired of our living authors. That he is so, can be accounted for on no other principle than the strong ties that bind

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us to the world about us and our involuntary yearnings after whatever in any manner powerfully and directly reminds us of it. His Muse is not one of *the Daughters of Memory*, but the old toothless, mumbling, dame herself, doling out the gossip and scandal of the neighbourhood, recounting *totidem verbis et literis* what happens in every place of the kingdom every hour in the year, and fastening always on the worst as the most palatable morsels. But she is a circumstantial old lady, communicative, scrupulous, leaving nothing to the imagination, harping on the smallest grievances, a village oracle and critic, most veritable, most identical, bringing us acquainted with persons and things just as they chanced to exist, and giving us a local interest in all she knows and tells.

Mr. Crabbe's Helicon is choked up with weeds and corruption; it reflects no light from heaven; it emits no cheerful sound; no flowers of love, of hope, or joy spring up near it, or they bloom only to wither in a moment. Our poet's verse does not put a spirit of youth in every thing, but a spirit of fear, despondency and decay. It is not an electric spark to kindle or expand, but acts like the torpedo's touch to deaden or contract. It lends no dazzling tints to fancy; it aids no soothing feelings in the heart; it gladdens no prospect, it stirs no wish; in its view the current of life runs slow, dull, cold, dispirited, half under ground, muddy, and clogged with all creeping things. The world is one vast infirmary; the hill of Parnassus is a penitentiary, of which our author is the overseer. To read him is a penance, yet we read on!

Mr. Crabbe, it must be confessed, is a repulsive writer. He contrives to "turn diseases to commodities," and makes a virtue of necessity. He puts us out of conceit with this world, which perhaps a severe divine should do,

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yet does not, as a charitable divine ought, point to another. His morbid feelings droop and cling to the earth, grovel where they should soar, and throw a dead weight on every aspiration of the soul after the good or beautiful. By degrees we submit, and are reconciled to our fate, like patients to the physician, or prisoners in the condemned cell. We can only explain this by saying, as we said before, that Mr. Crabbe gives us one part of nature: the mean, the little, the disgusting, the distressing, that he does this thoroughly and like a master; and we forgive all the rest.

Mr. Crabbe's first poems were published so long ago as the year 1782, and received the approbation of Dr. Johnson only a little before he died. This was a testimony from an enemy; for Dr. Johnson was not an admirer of the simple in style or minute in description. Still he was an acute, strong-minded man, and could see truth when it was presented to him, even through the mist of his prejudices and his foibles. There was something in Mr. Crabbe's intricate points that did not, after all, so ill accord with the Doctor's purblind vision; and he knew quite enough of the petty ills of life to judge of the merit of our poet's descriptions, though he himself chose to slur them over in high-sounding dogmas or general invectives. Mr. Crabbe's earliest poem of the *Village* was recommended to the notice of Dr. Johnson by Sir Joshua Reynolds; and we cannot help thinking that a taste for that sort of poetry, which leans for support on the truth and fidelity of its imitations of nature, began to display itself much about that time, and, in a good measure, in consequence of the direction of the public taste to the subject of painting. Book-learning, the accumulation of wordy common-places, the gaudy pretensions of poetical fiction, had enfeebled and perverted our eye for nature. The study of the fine arts,

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which came into fashion about forty years ago, and was then first considered as a polite accomplishment, would tend imperceptibly to restore it.

Painting is essentially an imitative art; it cannot subsist for a moment on empty generalities: the critic therefore, who had been used to this sort of substantial entertainment, would be disposed to read poetry with the eye of a connoisseur, would be little captivated with smooth, polished, unmeaning periods, and would turn with double eagerness and relish to the force and precision of individual details transferred, as it were, to the page from the canvas. Thus an admirer of Teniers or Hobbima might think little of the pastoral sketches of Pope or Goldsmith; even Thomson describes not so much the naked object as what he sees in his mind's eye, surrounded and glowing with the mild, bland, genial vapours of his brain. But the adept in Dutch interiors, hovels and pig-styes must find in Mr. Crabbe a man after his own heart. He is the very thing itself; he paints in words instead of colours: there is no other difference. As Mr. Crabbe is not a painter, only because he does not use a brush and colours, so he is for the most part a poet, only because he writes in lines of ten syllables. All the rest might be found in a newspaper, an old magazine, or a county-register.

Our author is himself a little jealous of the prudish fidelity of his homely Muse, and tries to justify himself by precedents. He brings as a parallel instance of merely literal description, Pope's lines on the gay Duke of Buckingham, beginning "In the worst inn's worst room see Villiers lies!" But surely nothing can be more dissimilar. Pope describes what is striking: Crabbe would have described merely what was there. The objects in Pope stand out to the fancy from the mixture of the mean with the gaudy, from the contrast

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of the scene and the character. There is an appeal to the imagination; you see what is passing in a poetical point of view. In Crabbe there is no foil, no contrast, no impulse given to the mind. It is all on a level and of a piece. In fact, there is so little connection between the subject-matter of Mr. Crabbe's lines and the ornament of rhyme which is tacked to them, that many of his verses read like serious burlesque, and the parodies which have been made upon them are hardly so quaint as the originals.

Mr. Crabbe's great fault is certainly that he is a sickly, a querulous, a uniformly dissatisfied poet. He sings the country; and he sings it in a pitiful tone. He chooses this subject only to take the charm out of it, and to dispel the illusion, the glory and the dream, which had hovered over it in golden verse from Theocritus to Cowper. He sets out with professing to overturn the theory which had hallowed a shepherd's life, and made the names of grove and valley music to our ears, in order to give us truth in its stead; but why not lay aside the fool's cap and bells at once? Why not insist on the unwelcome reality in plain prose? If our author is a poet, why trouble himself with statistics? If he is a statistic writer, why set his ill news to harsh and grating verse? The philosopher, in painting the dark side of human nature, may have reason on his side, and a moral lesson or remedy in view. The tragic poet, who shows the sad vicissitudes of things and the disappointments of the passions, at least strengthens our yearnings after imaginary good, and lends wings to our desires, by which we, "at one bound, high overleap all bound" of actual suffering. But Mr. Crabbe does neither. He gives us discoloured paintings of life: helpless, repining, unprofitable, unedifying distress. He is not a philosopher, but a sophist, a misanthrope in verse; a *namby-*

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pamby Mandeville, a Malthus turned metrical romancer. He professes historical fidelity; but his vein is not dramatic; nor does he give us the *pros* and *cons* of that versatile gipsey Nature. He does not indulge his fancy or sympathise with us, or tell us how the poor feel; but how he should feel in their situation, which we do not want to know. He does not weave the web of their lives of a mingled yarn, good and ill together, but clothes them all in the same dingy linsey-woolsey, or tinges them with a green and yellow melancholy. He blocks out all possibility of good, cancels the hope or even the wish for it as a weakness, checkmates Tityrus and Virgil at the game of pastoral cross-purposes, disables all his adversary's white pieces, and leaves none but black ones on the board.

The situation of a country clergyman is not necessarily favourable to the cultivation of the Muse. He is set down, perhaps, as he thinks, in a small curacy for life, and he takes his revenge by imprisoning the reader's imagination in luckless verse. Shut out from social converse, from learned colleges and halls, where he passed his youth, he has no cordial fellow-feeling with the unlettered manners of the *Village* or the *Borough*; and he describes his neighbours as more uncomfortable and discontented than himself. All this while he dedicates successive volumes to rising generations of noble patrons; and while he desolates a line of coast with sterile, blighting lines, the only leaf of his books where honour, beauty, worth, or pleasure bloom, is that inscribed to the Rutland family! We might adduce instances of what we have said from every page of his works: let one suffice—

> "Thus by himself compelled to live each day,
> To wait for certain hours the tide's delay;
> At the same times the same dull views to see,

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The bounding marsh-bank and the blighted tree
The water only when the tides were high,
When low, the mud half-covered and half-dry;
The sun-burnt tar that blisters on the planks,
And bank-side stakes in their uneven ranks;
Heaps of entangled weeds that slowly float,
As the tide rolls by the impeded boat.
When tides were neap, and in the sultry day,
Through the tall bounding mud-banks made their way,
Which on each side rose swelling, and below
The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from man to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels, that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping mussels, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fall'n flood:
Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How side-long crabs had crawled their crooked race;
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden-eye;
What time the sea-birds to the marsh would come,
And the loud bittern, from the bull-rush home,
Gave from the salt-ditch-side the bellowing boom:
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
Where the small stream, confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, saddening sound;
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
Oppressed the soul with misery, grief, and fear."

This is an exact *fac-simile* of some of the most unlovely parts of the creation. Indeed the whole of Mr. Crabbe's *Borough*, from which the above passage is taken, is done so to the life, that it seems almost like some sea-monster, crawled out of the neighbouring slime, and harbouring a breed of strange vermin, with a strong local scent of tar and bulge-water.

Mr. Crabbe's *Tales* are more readable than his *Poems;*

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but in proportion as the interest increases, they become more oppressive. They turn, one and all, upon the same sort of teazing, helpless, mechanical, unimaginative distress; and though it is not easy to lay them down, you never wish to take them up again. Still in this way they are highly finished, striking, and original portraits, worked out with an eye to nature, and an intimate knowledge of the small and intricate folds of the human heart. Some of the best are the *Confidant*, the story of *Silly Shore*, the *Young Poet*, the *Painter*. The episode of *Phœbe Dawson*, in the *Village*, is one of the most tender and pensive; and the character of the methodist parson who persecutes the sailor's widow with his godly, selfish love is one of the most profound. In a word, if Mr. Crabbe's writings do not add greatly to the store of entertaining and delightful fiction, yet they will remain, "as a thorn in the side of poetry," perhaps for a century to come!

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MR. T. MOORE.—MR. L. HUNT.

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MR. T. MOORE. MR. LEIGH HUNT.

> "Or winglet of the fairy humming-bird,
> Like atoms of the rainbow fluttering round."
>
> CAMPBELL.

THE lines placed at the head of this sketch, from a contemporary writer, appear to us very descriptive of Mr. Moore's poetry. His verse is like a shower of beauty, a dance of images, a stream of music, or like the spray of the water-fall, tinged by the morning-beam with rosy light. The characteristic distinction of our author's style is this continuous and incessant flow of voluptuous thoughts and shining allusions. He ought to write with a crystal pen on silver paper. His subject is set off by a dazzling veil of poetic diction, like a wreath of flowers gemmed with innumerous dew-drops, that weep, tremble and glitter in liquid softness and pearly light, while the song of birds ravishes the ear, and languid odours breathe around; and Aurora opens Heaven's smiling portals, Peris and nymphs peep through the golden glades, and an Angel's wing glances over the glossy scene.

> "No dainty flower or herb that grows on ground,
> No arboret with painted blossoms drest,
> And smelling sweet, but there it might be found
> To bud out fair, and its sweet smells throw all around.

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> No tree, whose branches did not bravely spring;
> No branch, whereon a fine bird did not sit;
> No bird, but did her shrill notes sweetly sing;
> No song, but did contain a lovely dit:
> Trees, branches, birds, and songs were framed fit
> For to allure frail minds to careless ease." . . . .

Mr. Campbell's imagination is fastidious and select; and hence, though we meet with more exquisite beauties in his writings, we meet with them more rarely: there is comparatively a dearth of ornament. But Mr. Moore's strictest economy is "wasteful and superfluous excess:" he is always liberal and never at a loss; for sooner than not stimulate and delight the reader, he is willing to be tawdry, or superficial, or common-place. His Muse must be fine at any rate, though she should paint, and wear cast-off decorations. Rather than have any lack of excitement, he repeats himself; and "Eden, and Eblis, and cherub-smiles" fill up the pauses of the sentiment with a sickly monotony. It has been too much our author's object to pander to the artificial taste of the age; and his productions, however brilliant and agreeable, are in consequence somewhat meretricious and effeminate. It was thought formerly enough to have an occasionally fine passage in the progress of a story or a poem, and an occasionally striking image or expression in a fine passage or description. But this style, it seems, was to be exploded as rude, Gothic, meagre and dry. Now all must be raised to the same tantalising and preposterous level. There must be no pause, no interval, no repose, no gradation. Simplicity and truth yield up the palm to affectation and grimace. The craving of the public mind after novelty and effect is a false and uneasy appetite that must be pampered with fine words at every step: we must be tickled with sound, startled with show, and relieved by the importunate, uninter-

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rupted display of fancy and verbal tinsel as much as possible from the fatigue of thought or shock of feeling.

A poem is to resemble an exhibition of fireworks, with a continual explosion of quaint figures and devices, flash after flash, that surprise for the moment, and leave no trace of light or warmth behind them. Or modern poetry in its retrograde progress comes at last to be constructed on the principles of the modern OPERA, where an attempt is made to gratify every sense at every instant, and where the understanding alone is insulted and the heart mocked. It is in this view only that we can discover that Mr. Moore's poetry is vitiated or immoral: it seduces the taste and enervates the imagination. It creates a false standard of reference, and inverts or decompounds the natural order of association, in which objects strike the thoughts and feelings. His is the poetry of the bath, of the toilette, of the saloon, of the fashionable world: not the poetry of nature, of the heart, or of human life. He stunts and enfeebles equally the growth of the imagination and the affections by not taking the seed of poetry and sowing it in the ground of truth, and letting it expand in the dew and rain, and shoot up to heaven,

> "And spread its sweet leaves to the air,
> Or dedicate its beauty to the sun,"—

instead of which he anticipates and defeats his own object by plucking flowers and blossoms from the stem, and setting them in the ground of idleness and folly, or in a cap of his own vanity, where they soon wither and disappear, "dying or ere they sicken!" This is but a sort of child's play, a short-sighted ambition. In Milton we meet with many prosaic lines, either because the subject does not require raising, or because they are necessary to connect the story, or serve as a relief to

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other passages. There is no such thing to be found in all Mr. Moore's writings.

His volumes present us with "a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets;" but we cannot add, "where no crude surfeit reigns." He indeed cloys with sweetness; he obscures with splendour; he fatigues with gaiety. We are stifled on beds of roses. We literally lie "on the rack of restless ecstacy." His flowery fancy "looks so fair and smells so sweet, that the sense aches at it." His verse droops and languishes under a load of beauty, like a bough laden with fruit. His gorgeous style is like "another morn risen on mid-noon." There is no passage that is not made up of blushing lines, no line that is not enriched with a sparkling metaphor, no image that is left unadorned with a double epithet. All his verbs, nouns, adjectives, are equally glossy, smooth and beautiful. Every stanza is transparent with light, perfumed with odours, floating with liquid harmony, melting in luxurious, evanescent delights. His Muse is never contented with an offering from one sense alone, but brings another rifled charm to match it, and revels in a fairy round of pleasure. The interest is not dramatic, but melo-dramatic: it is a mixture of painting, poetry, and music, of the natural and preternatural, of obvious sentiment and romantic costume. A rose is a *Gul*, a nightingale a *Bulbul*. We might fancy ourselves in an eastern harem, amidst ottomans and otto of roses, and veils and spangles, and marble pillars, and cool fountains, and Arab maids and Genii, and magicians, and Peris, and cherubs and what not?

Mr. Moore has a little mistaken the art of poetry for the *cosmetic art*. He does not compose an historic group or work out a single figure, but throws a variety of elementary sensations, of vivid impressions, together, and calls it a description. He makes out an inventory of

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beauty: the smile on the lips, the dimple on the cheeks, *item*, golden locks, *item*, a pair of blue wings, *item*, a silver sound, with breathing fragrance and radiant light, and thinks it a character or a story. He gets together a number of fine things and fine names, and thinks that, flung on heaps, they make up a fine poem. This dissipated, fulsome, painted, patch-work style may succeed in the levity and languor of the *boudoir*, or might have been adapted to the Pavilions of royalty; but it is not the style of Parnassus, nor a passport to Immortality. It is not the taste of the ancients, "'tis not classical lore," nor the fashion of Tibullus or Theocritus, or Anacreon, or Virgil, or Ariosto, or Pope, or Byron, or any great writer among the living or the dead; but it is the style of our English Anacreon, and it is (or was) the fashion of the day!

Let one example (and that an admired one) taken from *Lalla Rookh*, suffice to explain the mystery, and soften the harshness of the foregoing criticism.

"Now, upon Syria's land of roses
Softly the light of eve reposes,
And, like a glory, the broad sun
Hangs over sainted Lebanon;
Whose head in wintry grandeur towers,
And whitens with eternal sleet,
While summer, in a vale of flowers,
Is sleeping rosy at his feet.

To one who look'd from upper air
O'er all the' enchanted regions there,
How beauteous must have been the glow,
The life, the sparkling from below!
Fair gardens, shining streams, with ranks
Of golden melons on their banks,
More golden where the sunlight falls;—
Gay lizards, glittering on the walls
Of ruin'd shrines, busy and bright
As they were all alive with light;—

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And, yet more splendid, numerous flocks
Of pigeons, settling on the rocks,
With their rich restless wings, that gleam
Variously in the crimson beam
Of the warm west,—as if inlaid
With brilliants from the mine, or made
Of tearless rainbows, such as span
Th' unclouded skies of Peristan!
And then, the mingling sounds that come,
Of shepherd's ancient reed, with hum
Of the wild bees of Palestine,
Banquetting through the flowery vales;—
And, Jordan, those sweet banks of thine,
And woods so full of nightingales!"

The following lines are the very perfection of Della Cruscan sentiment and affected orientalism of style. The Peri exclaims on finding that old talisman and hackneyed poetical machine, "a penitent tear"—

"Joy, joy for ever! my task is done—
The gates are pass'd, and Heaven is won!
Oh! am I not happy? I am, I am—
To thee, sweet Eden! how dark and sad
Are the diamond turrets of Shadukiam,
And the fragrant bowers of Amberabad!"

There is in all this a play of fancy, a glitter of words, a shallowness of thought and a want of truth and solidity, that is wonderful, and that nothing but the heedless, rapid glide of the verse could render tolerable. It seems that the poet, as well as the lover,

"May bestride the Gossamer,
That wantons in the idle, summer air,
And yet not fall, so light is vanity!"

Mr. Moore ought not to contend with serious difficulties or with entire subjects. He can write verses, not a

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poem. There is no principle of massing or of continuity in his productions, neither height nor breadth nor depth of capacity. There is no truth of representation, no strong internal feeling, but a continual flutter and display of affected airs and graces, like a finished coquette, who hides the want of symmetry by extravagance of dress and the want of passion by flippant forwardness and unmeaning sentimentality.

All is flimsy, all is florid to excess. His imagination may dally with insect beauties, with Rosicrucian spells: may describe a butterfly's wing, a flower-pot, a fan; but it should not attempt to span the great outlines of nature, or keep pace with the sounding march of events, or grapple with the strong fibres of the human heart. The great becomes turgid in his hands, the pathetic insipid. If Mr. Moore were to describe the heights of Chimboraco, instead of the loneliness, the vastness and the shadowy might, he would only think of adorning it with roseate tints, like a strawberry-ice, and would transform a magician's fortress in the Himalaya (stripped of its mysterious gloom and frowning horrors) into a jeweller's toy, to be set upon a lady's toilette. In proof of this, see above "the diamond turrets of Shadukiam," &c. The description of Mokanna in the fight, though it has spirit and grandeur of effect, has still a great alloy of the mock-heroic in it. The route of blood and death, which is otherwise well-marked, is infested with a swarm of "fire-fly" fancies.

> "In vain Mokanna, 'midst the general flight,
> Stands, like the red moon, in some stormy night,
> Among the fugitive clouds, that hurrying by,
> Leave only her unshaken in the sky."

This simile is fine, and would have been perfect, but that the moon is not red, and that she seems to hurry by the clouds, not they by her.

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The description of the warrior's youthful adversary,

> ——"Whose coming seems
> A light, a glory, such as breaks in dreams——"

is fantastic and enervated: a field of battle has nothing to do with dreams. And again, the two lines immediately after,

> "And every sword, true as o'er billows dim
> The needle tracks the load-star, following him"—

are a mere piece of enigmatical ingenuity and scientific *mimminee-pimminee.*

We cannot except the *Irish Melodies* from the same censure. If these national airs do indeed express the soul of impassioned feeling in his countrymen, the case of Ireland is hopeless. If these prettinesses pass for patriotism, if a country can heave from its heart's core only these vapid, varnished sentiments, lip-deep, and let its tears of blood evaporate in an empty conceit, let it be governed as it has been. There are here no tones to waken Liberty, to console Humanity. Mr. Moore converts the wild harp of Erin into a musical snuff-box![1]

We *do* except from this censure the author's political squibs and the "Twopenny Post-bag." These are essences, are "nests of spicery," bitter and sweet, honey and gall together. No one can so well describe the set speech of a dull formalist[2] or the flowing locks of a Dowager,

> "In the manner of Ackermann's dresses for May."

[1] Compare his songs with Burns's.

[2] "There was a little man, and he had a little soul,
And he said, Little soul, let us try," &c.

Parody on

> "There was a little man, and he had a little gun."—

One should think this exquisite ridicule of a pedantic effusion might have silenced for ever the automaton that delivered it: but the

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His light, agreeable, polished style pierces through the body of the court, hits off the faded graces of "an Adonis of fifty," weighs the vanity of fashion in tremulous scales, mimics the grimace of affectation and folly, shows up the littleness of the great, and spears a phalanx of statesmen with its glittering point as with a diamond brooch.

> "In choosing songs the Regent named,
> 'Had I a heart for falsehood fram'd:'
> While gentle Hertford begg'd and pray'd
> For 'Young I am, and sore afraid."

Nothing in Pope or Prior ever surpassed the delicate insinuation and adroit satire of these lines and hundreds more of our author's composition. We wish he would not take pains to make us think of them with less pleasure than formerly. The "Fudge Family" is in the same spirit, but with a little falling-off. There is too great a mixture of undisguised Jacobinism and fashionable *slang*. The "divine Fanny Bias" and "the mountains *à la Russe*" figure in somewhat quaintly with Buonaparte and the Bourbons. The poet also launches the lightning of political indignation; but it rather plays round and illumines his own pen than reaches the devoted heads at which it is aimed!

Mr. Moore is in private life an amiable and estimable man. The embellished and voluptuous style of his poetry, his unpretending origin and his *mignon* figure, soon introduced him to the notice of the great; and his gaiety, his wit, his good-humour, and many agreeable accomplishments fixed him there, the darling of his

official personage in question at the close of the Session addressed an extra-official congratulation to the Prince Regent on a bill that had *not* passed, as if to repeat and insist upon our errors were to justify them.

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friends and the idol of fashion. If he is no longer familiar with Royalty as with his garter, the fault is not his; his adherence to his principles caused the separation; his love of his country was the cloud that intercepted the sunshine of court-favour. This is so far well. Mr. Moore vindicates his own dignity; but the sense of intrinsic worth, of wide-spread fame, and of the intimacy of the great makes him perhaps a little too fastidious and *exigeant* as to the pretensions of others. He has been so long accustomed to the society of Whig Lords, and so enchanted with the smile of beauty and fashion, that he really fancies himself one of the *set* to which he is admitted on sufferance, and tries very unnecessarily to keep others out of it. He talks familiarly of works that are or are not read "in *our* circle," and, seated smiling and at his ease in a coronet-coach, enlivening the owner by his brisk sallies and Attic conceits, is shocked, as he passes, to see a Peer of the realm shake hands with a poet.

There is a little indulgence of spleen and envy, a little servility and pandering to aristocratic pride in this proceeding. Is Mr. Moore bound to advise a Noble Poet to get as fast as possible out of a certain publication,[1] lest he should not be able to give an account at Holland or at Lansdown House, how his friend Lord Byron had associated himself with his friend Leigh Hunt? Is he afraid that the "Spirit of Monarchy"[2] will eclipse the "Fables for the Holy Alliance" in virulence and plain-speaking? Or are the members of the "Fudge Family" to secure a monopoly for the abuse of the Bourbons and the doctrine of Divine Right? Because he is genteel and sarcastic, may not others be paradoxical and argumentative? Or must no one bark at a Minister or

[1] The *Liberal*.—Ed.

[2] A paper contributed by Hazlitt to the *Liberal*.—Ed.

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General, unless they have been first dandled, like a little French pug-dog, in the lap of a lady of quality? Does Mr. Moore insist on the double claim of birth and genius as a title to respectability in all advocates of the popular side—but himself? Or is he anxious to keep the pretensions of his patrician and plebeian friends quite separate, so as to be himself the only point of union, a sort of *double meaning*, between the two? It is idle to think of setting bounds to the weakness and illusions of self-love as long as it is confined to a man's own breast; but it ought not to be made a plea for holding back the powerful hand that is stretched out to save another struggling with the tide of popular prejudice, who has suffered shipwreck of health, fame and fortune in a common cause, and who has deserved the aid and the good wishes of all who are (on principle) embarked in the same cause by equal zeal and honesty, if not by equal talents, to support and to adorn it!

We shall conclude the present article with a short notice of an individual who, in the cast of his mind and in political principle, bears no very remote resemblance to the patriot and wit just spoken of, and on whose merits we should descant at greater length, but that personal intimacy might be supposed to render us partial. It is well when personal intimacy produces this effect; and when the light, that dazzled us at a distance, does not on a closer inspection turn out an opaque substance.

This is a charge that none of his friends will bring against Mr. Leigh Hunt. He improves upon acquaintance. The author translates admirably into the man. Indeed, the very faults of his style are virtues in the individual. His natural gaiety and sprightliness of manner, his high animal spirits, and the *vinous* quality of his mind, produce an immediate fascination and intoxication in those who come in contact with him, and

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carry off in society whatever in his writings may to some seem flat and impertinent. From great sanguineness of temper, from great quickness and unsuspecting simplicity, he runs on to the public as he does at his own fire-side, and talks about himself, forgetting that he is not always among friends. His look, his tone are required to point many things that he says: his frank, cordial manner reconciles you instantly to a little over-bearing, over-weening self-complacency. "To be admired, he needs but to be seen:" but perhaps he ought to be seen to be fully appreciated. No one ever sought his society who did not come away with a more favourable opinion of him: no one was ever disappointed, except those who had entertained idle prejudices against him. He sometimes trifles with his readers, or tires of a subject (from not being urged on by the stimulus of immediate sympathy); but in conversation he is all life and animation, combining the vivacity of the school-boy with the resources of the wit and the taste of the scholar. The personal character, the spontaneous impulses, do not appear to excuse the author, unless you are acquainted with his situation and habits: like some great beauty who gives herself what we think strange airs and graces under a mask, but who is instantly forgiven when she shews her face.

We have said that Lord Byron is a sublime coxcomb: why should we not say that Mr. Hunt is a delightful one? There is certainly an exuberance of satisfaction in his manner which is more than the strict logical premises warrant, and which dull and phlegmatic constitutions know nothing of, and cannot understand till they see it. He is the only poet or literary man we ever knew, who puts us in mind of Sir John Suckling or Killigrew, or Carew; or who united rare intellectual acquirements with outward grace and natural gentility. Mr. Hunt ought to have been a gentleman born, and to have patronised men of letters. He might then have

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played, and sung, and laughed, and talked his life away; have written manly prose, elegant verse: and his *Story of Rimini* would have been praised by Mr. Blackwood. As it is, there is no man now living who at the same time writes prose and verse so well, with the exception of Mr. Southey (an exception, we fear, that will be little palatable to either of these gentlemen). His prose writings, however, display more consistency of principle than the Laureate's, his verses more taste. We will venture to oppose his Third Canto of the *Story of Rimini* for classic elegance and natural feeling to any equal number of lines from Mr. Southey's Epics or from Mr. Moore's *Lalla Rookh*. In a more gay and conversational style of writing, we think his *Epistle to Lord Byron*[1] on his going abroad is a masterpiece; and the *Feast of the Poets* has run through several editions. A light, familiar grace, and mild unpretending pathos, are the characteristics of his more sportive or serious writings, whether in poetry or prose. A smile plays round the sparkling features of the one; a tear is ready to start from the thoughtful gaze of the other. He perhaps takes too little pains, and indulges in too much wayward caprice in both.

A wit and a poet, Mr. Hunt is also distinguished by fineness of tact and sterling sense: he has only been a visionary in humanity, the fool of virtue. What then is the drawback to so many shining qualities, that has made them useless, or even hurtful to their owner? His crime is, to have been Editor of the *Examiner* ten years ago, when some allusion was made in it to the age of the present king,[2] and though his Majesty has grown older, our luckless politician is no wiser than he was then!

[1] First printed, I believe, in *Foliage*, 1818, p. lxix. *et seq.* Hazlitt selected it as a favourable example of Leigh Hunt's poetry in the *New Elegant Extracts*, 1824.—Ed.

[2] The well-known reference to the Prince Regent as an Adonis of fifty. See p. 327, *suprâ*.—Ed.

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ELIA AND GEOFFREY CRAYON.

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ELIA, AND GEOFFREY CRAYON.

SO Mr. Charles Lamb and Mr. Washington Irving choose to designate themselves; and as their lucubrations under one or other of these *noms de guerre* have gained considerable notice from the public, we shall here attempt to discriminate their several styles and manner, and to point out the beauties and defects of each in treating of somewhat similar subjects.

Mr. Irving is, we take it, the more popular writer of the two, or a more general favourite: Mr. Lamb has more devoted and perhaps more judicious partisans. Mr. Irving is by birth an American, and has, as it were, *skimmed the cream*, and taken off patterns with great skill and cleverness, from our best-known and happiest writers, so that their thoughts and almost their reputation are indirectly transferred to his page, and smile upon us from another hemisphere, like "the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow." He succeeds to our admiration and our sympathy by a sort of prescriptive title and traditional privilege. Mr. Lamb, on the contrary, being "native to the manner here," though he too has borrowed from previous sources, instead of availing himself of the most popular and admired, has groped out

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his way, and made his most successful researches among the more obscure and intricate, though certainly not the least pithy or pleasant of our writers. Mr. Washington Irving has culled and transplanted the flowers of modern literature for the amusement of the general reader: Mr. Lamb has raked among the dust and cobwebs of a more remote period, has exhibited specimens of curious relics. and pored over moth-eaten, decayed manuscripts[1] for the benefit of the more inquisitive and discerning part of the public. Antiquity after a time has the grace of novelty, as old fashions revived are mistaken for new ones; and a certain quaintness and singularity of style is an agreeable relief to the smooth and insipid monotony of modern composition.

Mr. Lamb has succeeded, not by conforming to the *Spirit of the Age*, but in opposition to it. He does not march boldly along with the crowd, but steals off the pavement to pick his way in the contrary direction. He prefers *bye-ways* to *highways*. When the full tide of human life pours along to some festive show, to some pageant of a day, Elia would stand on one side to look over an old book-stall, or stroll down some deserted pathway in search of a pensive description over a tottering doorway, or some quaint device in architecture, illustrative of embryo art and ancient manners. Mr. Lamb has the very soul of an antiquarian, as this implies a reflecting humanity; the film of the past hovers forever before him. He is shy, sensitive, the reverse of every thing coarse, vulgar, obtrusive, and *common-place*. He would fain "shuffle off this mortal coil;" and his

[1] The author of these remarks was not an antiquary himself, or he would have known that Lamb did nothing of the kind. The utmost that he achieved in that way was his extracts from the Garrick Plays and occasional *excerpta* from old printed books in his own collection.—Ed.

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spirit clothes itself in the garb of elder time, homelier, but more durable. He is borne along with no pompous paradoxes, shines in no glittering tinsel of a fashionable phraseology, is neither fop nor sophist. He has none of the turbulence or froth of new-fangled opinions. His style runs pure and clear, though it may often take an underground course, or be conveyed through old-fashioned conduit-pipes. Mr. Lamb does not court popularity, nor strut in gaudy plumes, but shrinks from every kind of ostentatious and obvious pretension into the retirement of his own mind.

> "The self-applauding bird, the peacock see:—
> Mark what a sumptuous pharisee is he!
> Meridian sun-beams tempt him to unfold
> His radiant glories, azure, green, and gold:
> He treads as if, some solemn music near,
> His measured step were governed by his ear:
> And seems to say—'Ye meaner fowl, give place,
> I am all splendour, dignity, and grace!'
> Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
> Though he too has a glory in his plumes.
> He, Christian-like, retreats with modest mien
> To the close copse or far sequestered green,
> And shines without desiring to be seen."

These lines well describe the modest and delicate beauties of Mr. Lamb's writings, contrasted with the lofty and vain-glorious pretensions of some of his contemporaries. This gentleman is not one of those who pay all their homage to the prevailing idol: he thinks that

> "New-born gauds are made and moulded of things past,"

nor does he

> "Give to dust that is a little gilt
> More laud than gilt o'er-dusted."

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His convictions "do not in broad rumour lie," nor are they "set off to the world in the glistering foil" of fashion, but "live and breathe aloft in those pure eyes, and perfect judgment of all-seeing *time*."

Mr. Lamb rather affects and is tenacious of the obscure and remote, of that which rests on its own intrinsic and silent merit; which scorns all alliance or even the suspicion of owing any thing to noisy clamour, to the glare of circumstances. There is a fine tone of *chiaro-scuro*, a moral perspective in his writings. He delights to dwell on that which is fresh to the eye of memory; he yearns after and covets what soothes the frailty of human nature. That touches him most nearly which is withdrawn to a certain distance, which verges on the borders of oblivion: that piques and provokes his fancy most, which is hid from a superficial glance. That which, though gone by, is still remembered, is in his view more genuine, and has given more "vital signs that it will live," than a thing of yesterday, that may be forgotten to-morrow. Death has in this sense the spirit of life in it; and the shadowy has to our author something substantial in it. Ideas savour most of reality in his mind; or rather his imagination loiters on the edge of each, and a page of his writings recals to our fancy the *stranger* on the grate, fluttering in its dusky tenuity, with its idle superstition and hospitable welcome!

Mr. Lamb has a distaste to new faces, to new books, to new buildings, to new customs. He is shy of all imposing appearances, of all assumptions of self-importance, of all adventitious ornaments, of all mechanical advantages, even to a nervous excess. It is not merely that he does not rely upon, or ordinarily avail himself of them; he holds them in abhorrence; he utterly abjures and discards them, and places a great

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gulph between him and them. He disdains all the vulgar artifices of authorship, all the cant of criticism and helps to notoriety. He has no grand swelling theories to attract the visionary and the enthusiast, no passing topics to allure the thoughtless and the vain. He evades the present; he mocks the future. His affections revert to, and settle on the past; but then even this must have something personal and local in it to interest him deeply and thoroughly. He pitches his tent in the suburbs of existing manners, brings down the account of character to the few straggling remains of the last generation, seldom ventures beyond the bills of mortality, and occupies that nice point between egotism and disinterested humanity. No one makes the tour of our southern metropolis, or describes the manners of the last age, so well as Mr. Lamb: with so fine and yet so formal an air: with such vivid obscurity: with such arch piquancy, such picturesque quaintness, such smiling pathos.

How admirably he has sketched the former inmates of the South-Sea House; what "fine fretwork he makes of their double and single entries!" With what a firm, yet subtle pencil he has embodied *Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist!* How notably he embalms a battered *beau;* how delightfully an amour, that was cold forty years ago, revives in his pages! With what well-disguised humour he introduces us to his relations, and how freely he serves up his friends! Certainly, some of his portraits are *fixtures*, and will do to hang up as lasting and lively emblems of human infirmity. Then there is no one who has so sure an ear for "the chimes at midnight," not even excepting Mr. Justice Shallow; nor could Master Silence himself take his "cheese and pippins" with a more significant and satisfactory air. With what a gusto Mr. Lamb describes the Inns and

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Courts of law, the Temple and Gray's-Inn, as if he had been a student there for the last two hundred years, and had been as well acquainted with the person of Sir Francis Bacon as he is with his portrait or writings! It is hard to say whether St. John's Gate is connected with more intense and authentic associations in his mind, as a part of old London Wall, or as the frontispiece (time out of mind) of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He haunts Watling-street like a gentle spirit; the avenues to the play-houses are thick with panting recollections; and Christ's-Hospital still breathes the balmy breath of infancy in his description of it! Whittington and his Cat are a fine hallucination for Mr. Lamb's historic Muse, and we believe he never heartily forgave a certain writer who took the subject of Guy Faux out of his hands.[1] The streets of London are his fairy-land, teeming with wonder, with life and interest to his retrospective glance, as it did to the eager eye of childhood; he has contrived to weave its tritest traditions into a bright and endless romance!

Mr. Lamb's taste in books is also fine; and it is peculiar. It is not the worse for a little *idiosyncrasy*. He does not go deep into the Scotch Novels; but he is at home in Smollett or Fielding. He is little read in Junius or Gibbon; but no man can give a better account of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, or Sir Thomas Brown's *Urn-Burial*, or Fuller's *Worthies*, or John Bunyan's *Holy War*. No one is more unimpressible to a specious declamation; no one relishes a recondite beauty more. His admiration of Shakespear and Milton does not make him despise Pope; and he can read

[1] Hazlitt, to wit, who contributed to the *Examiner* in 1821 *A Defence of Guy Faux*. Lamb's paper in the *London Magazine* on the same subject did not appear till 1823. See *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, 316.—Ed.

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Parnell with patience and Gay with delight. His taste in French and German literature is somewhat defective; nor has he made much progress in the science of Political Economy or other abstruse studies, though he has read vast folios of controversial divinity, merely for the sake of the intricacy of style, and to save himself the pain of thinking.

Mr. Lamb is a good judge of prints and pictures. His admiration of Hogarth does credit to both, particularly when it is considered that Leonardo da Vinci is his next greatest favourite, and that his love of the *actual* does not proceed from a want of taste for the *ideal*. His worst fault is an over-eagerness of enthusiasm, which occasionally makes him take a surfeit of his highest favourites. Mr. Lamb excels in familiar conversation almost as much as in writing, when his modesty does not overpower his self-possession. He is as little of a proser as possible; but he *blurts* out the finest wit and sense in the world. He keeps a good deal in the background at first, till some excellent conceit pushes him forward, and then he abounds in whim and pleasantry. There is a primitive simplicity and self-denial about his manners and a Quakerism in his personal appearance, which is, however, relieved by a fine Titian[1] head, full of dumb eloquence!

Mr. Lamb is a general favourite with those who know him. His character is equally singular and amiable. He is endeared to his friends not less by his foibles than his virtues; he insures their esteem by the one, and does not wound their self-love by the other. He gains ground in the opinion of others by making no advances in his own. We easily admire genius where the diffidence of the possessor makes our acknowledgment of merit

[1] It was, perhaps, the notion of this *Titian* head, which led Hazlitt to paint Lamb in the garb of a Venetian senator.—Ed.

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seem like a sort of patronage or act of condescension, as we willingly extend our good offices where they are not exacted as obligations or repaid with sullen indifference.

The style of the Essays of Elia is liable to the charge of a certain *mannerism.* His sentences are cast in the mould of old authors; his expressions are borrowed from them; but his feelings and observations are genuine and original, taken from actual life or from his own breast; and he may be said (if any one can) "to have coined his heart for *jests*," and to have split his brain for fine distinctions! Mr. Lamb, from the peculiarity of his exterior and address as an author, would probably never have made his way by detached and independent efforts; but, fortunately for himself and others, he has taken advantage of the Periodical Press, where he has been stuck into notice; and the texture of his compositions is assuredly fine enough to bear the broadest glare of popularity that has hitherto shone upon them. Mr. Lamb's literary efforts have procured him civic honours (a thing unheard of in our times), and he has been invited, in his character of ELIA, to dine at a select party with the Lord Mayor. We should prefer this distinction to that of being poet-laureat. We would recommend to Mr. Waithman's perusal (if Mr. Lamb has not anticipated us) the *Rosamund Gray* and the *John Woodvil* of the same author, as an agreeable relief to the noise of a City feast and the heat of City elections.

A friend, a short time ago, quoted some lines[1] from the last-mentioned of these works, which meeting Mr.

[1] The description of sports in the forest:

> "To see the sun to bed and to arise,
> Like some hot amourist with glowing eyes," &c.

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Godwin's eye, he was so struck with the beauty of the passage and with a consciousness of having seen it before, that he was uneasy till he could recollect where, and after hunting in vain for it in Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, and other not unlikely places, sent to Mr. Lamb to know if he could help him to the author!

Mr. Washington Irving's acquaintance with English literature begins almost where Mr. Lamb's ends,—with the *Spectator*, Tom Brown's works and the wits of Queen Anne. He is not bottomed in our elder writers, nor do we think he has tasked his own faculties much, at least on English ground. Of the merit of his *Knickerbocker* and New York stories we cannot pretend to judge. But in his *Sketch-book* and *Bracebridge-Hall* he gives us very good American copies of our British Essayists and Novelists, which may be very well on the other side of the water, or as proofs of the capabilities of the national genius, but which might be dispensed with here, where we have to boast of the originals. Not only Mr. Irving's language is with great taste and felicity modelled on that of Addison, Goldsmith, Sterne, or Mackenzie: but the thoughts and sentiments are taken at the rebound, and, as they are brought forward at the present period, want both freshness and probability.

Mr. Irving's writings are literary *anachronisms*. He comes to England for the first time, and being on the spot, fancies himself in the midst of those characters and manners which he had read of in the *Spectator* and other approved authors, and which were the only idea he had hitherto formed of the parent country. Instead of looking round to see what *we are*, he sets to work to describe us as *we were*—at second hand. He has Parson Adams or Sir Roger de Coverley in his "*mind's eye;*" and he makes a village curate or a country 'squire in

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Yorkshire or Hampshire sit to these admired models for their portraits in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Whatever the ingenious author has been most delighted with in the representations of books he transfers to his port-folio, and swears that he has found it actually existing in the course of his observation and travels through Great Britain. Instead of tracing the changes that have taken place in society since Addison or Fielding wrote, he transcribes their account in a different hand-writing, and thus keeps us stationary, at least in our most attractive and praise-worthy qualities of simplicity, honesty, hospitality, modesty, and good-nature. This is a very flattering mode of turning fiction into history or history into fiction; and we should scarcely know ourselves again in the softened and altered likeness, but that it bears the date of 1820, and issues from the press in Albemarle-street.

This is one way of complimenting our national and Tory prejudices, and, coupled with literal or exaggerated portraits of *Yankee* peculiarities, could hardly fail to please. The first Essay in the *Sketch-book*, that on National Antipathies, is the best; but, after that, the sterling ore of wit or feeling is gradually spun thinner and thinner, till it fades to the shadow of a shade. Mr. Irving is himself, we believe, a most agreeable and deserving man, and has been led into the natural and pardonable error we speak of by the tempting bait of European popularity, in which he thought there was no more likely method of succeeding than by imitating the style of our standard authors, and giving us credit for the virtues of our forefathers.

We should not feel that we had discharged our obligations to truth or friendship, if we were to let this volume go without introducing into it the name of the

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author of *Virginius*. This is the more proper, inasmuch as he is a character by himself and the only poet now living that is a mere poet. If we were asked what sort of a man Mr. Knowles is, we could only say, "he is the writer of *Virginius*." His most intimate friends see nothing in him by which they could trace the work to the author. The seeds of dramatic genius are contained and fostered in the warmth of the blood that flows in his veins; his heart dictates to his head. The most unconscious, the most unpretending, the most artless of mortals, he instinctively obeys the impulses of natural feeling, and produces a perfect work of art. He has hardly read a poem or a play, or seen any thing of the world; but he hears the anxious beatings of his own heart, and makes others feel them by the force of sympathy. Ignorant alike of rules, regardless of models, he follows the steps of truth and simplicity; and strength, proportion and delicacy are the infallible results. By thinking of nothing but his subject, he rivets the attention of the audience to it. All his dialogue tends to action; all his situations form classic groups. There is no doubt that *Virginius* is the best acting tragedy that has been produced on the modern stage. Mr. Knowles himself was a player at one time, and this circumstance has probably enabled him to judge of the picturesque and dramatic effect of his lines, as we think it might have assisted Shakespear. There is no impertinent display, no flaunting poetry; the writer immediately conceives how a thought would tell if he had to speak it himself. Mr. Knowles is the first tragic writer of the age; in other respects he is a common man, and divides his time and his affections between his plots and his fishing-tackle, between the Muses' spring and those mountain-streams which sparkle like his own eye, that gush out like his own voice at the sight of an old friend. We have

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known him almost from a child, and we must say he appears to us the same boy-poet that he ever was. He has been cradled in song, and rocked in it as in a dream, forgetful of himself and of the world!

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FREE THOUGHTS

ON

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO

A MEMBER OF THE OLD OPPOSITION.

(1806.)

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[Of this pamphlet, printed at the author's own risk, and doubtless the rarest of all his works, a sufficient account will be found in the *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, i., 129. It has never hitherto been republished, but the character of Pitt was abstracted in the *Eloquence of the British Senate*, 1807, and subsequently included in the little volume entitled *Winterslow*, 12mo., 1850, which constitutes part of the present collected Series. My copy of the original impression was the Author's.—Ed.]

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ADVICE TO A PATRIOT;

IN

A LETTER

ADDRESSED

TO A MEMBER OF THE OLD OPPOSITION.

SIR,

IF the opposition of character between the individuals of different nations is that which attaches every one the most strongly to his own country; if the love of liberty instilled from our very cradle is any security for the hatred of oppression; if a spirit of independence, and a constitutional stubbornness of temper are not forward to crouch under the yoke of unjust ambition; if to look up with heart-felt admiration to the great names, whether heroes or sages, which England has produced, and to be unwilling that the country which gave birth to Shakespear and Milton should ever be enslaved by a mean and servile foe; if to love its glory—that virtue, that integrity, that genius, which have distinguished it from all others, and in which its true greatness consists, —is to love one's country, there are few persons who have a better right than myself (on the score of sincerity) to offer that kind of advice which is the subject of the following letter, however weak or defective it may be found.

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To love one's country is to wish well to it; to prefer its interests to our own; to oppose every measure inconsistent with its welfare; and to be ready to sacrifice ease, health, and life itself in its defence. But there is a false kind of patriotism, loud and noisy, and ever ready to usurp that name from others, as an honourable covering either for selfish designs or blind zeal, to which I shall make no pretensions. It has been called patriotism, to flatter those in power at the expence of the people; to sail with the stream; to make a popular prejudice the stalking-horse of ambition, to mislead first and then betray; to enrich yourself out of the public treasure; to strengthen your influence by pursuing such measures as give to the richest members of the community an opportunity of becoming richer, and to laugh at the waste of blood and the general misery which they occasion; to defend every act of a party, and to treat all those as enemies of their country who do not think the pride of a minister and the avarice of a few of his creatures of more consequence than the safety and happiness of a free, brave, industrious, and honest people; to strike at the liberty of other countries, and through them at your own; to change the maxims of a state, to degrade its spirit, to insult its feelings, and tear from it its well-earned and proudest distinctions; to soothe the follies of the multitude, to lull them in their sleep, to goad them on in their madness, and, under the terror of imaginary evils, to cheat them of their best privileges; to blow the blast of war for a livelihood in journals and pamphlets, and by spreading abroad incessantly a a spirit of defiance, animosity, suspicion, distrust, and the most galling contempt, to make it impossible that we should ever remain at peace or in safety, while insults and general obloquy have a tendency to provoke those passions in others which they are intended to excite.

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Being then of opinion, that to flatter is not always the duty of a friend; that it is no part of the love of one's country to be blind to her errors, or to wish her to persist in them; I may take the liberty of stating freely such observations as have occurred to an unprejudiced but not indifferent spectator on the present state of things: and there is at least this advantage in reflections which are not the echo of the popular cry, that something may be found in them, however unsupported or frivolous in general, which may be turned to good account by persons of sounder judgment and more extensive means of information. It has been said that "there is wisdom in a multitude of counsellors;" but if they only raise a clamour by repeating all of them the same thing, I do see how this advantage can be obtained.

What I would chiefly remark upon is,—How far the principles and views acted upon by the late administrations are such as to afford us the safest and most honourable ground for prosecuting a war which is said to be carried on for the existence of the empire.

Had I to engage with an enemy in a struggle of this kind, the ground which I should choose to occupy would be such a one as that he must feel himself to be the aggressor. In a conflict which is to decide the fate of a people, I think the greatest care should be taken to remove all doubtful or frivolous causes of debate, to suffer no sinister motives to divert their minds from the great object in which they are engaged or lessen their steady confidence in the justice of their cause. It is hardly to be expected that the mass of a people should defend the patrimony of independence which they inherit from their ancestors with the reverence, intrepidity, and dauntless zeal required of them, when they see a minister ready to gamble it away for the first idle object that excites his cupidity, or opens

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a door to the spirit of intrigue. Examining the conduct of those who were the advisers and authors of the late renewal of hostilities according to these maxims, which seem to me well founded, it is not easy to imagine any thing more remote from true dignity, magnanimity, or wisdom, than the manner in which we choose to enter upon a war on which we were to stake our all. We chose to rest a dispute, which was to involve every thing near and dear to us, on a diplomatic ambiguity; on a technical question, as to the manner how and to whom we were to give up a barren rock which was of no use to us, and to which we had resigned all pretensions. It was clear that we had refused to fulfil our share of a treaty which had been formally ratified; but the reasons which we gave for doing this were by no means equally clear and satisfactory. They sounded more like the excuses of those seeking a pretence for the continuance of an unsuccessful contest, than the remonstrances of persons sincerely anxious for peace, and opposed by real difficulties. I remember at the time when the design of retaining Malta was first made known, every one's remark was,—Had we not agreed to give it up? And as to the official reasons for this change of measures, which were afterwards detailed to the public with such pomp and circumstance, viz., that it was to have been given up to the Order that formerly possessed it only on the supposition of that Order's remaining entire, though no such condition had been expressed, and under the guarantee of another power whose consent had neither been asked or obtained, I believe that no one who was not either indifferent to peace or desirous of war ever thought them of sufficient consequence to justify us in exposing ourselves to unnecessary reproach and odium, and plunging into a sea of unknown troubles. It is certain that by the generality of

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people they could neither be felt nor understood. On this tottering fonudation did Mr. Addington think proper to take his stand. Doubt, perplexity, evasion, a general indifference as to the immediate object of the dispute, and a direct accusation of breach of faith on the part of the enemy were the auspices under which we were to begin a war, which ought (from the tremendous consequences attached to it) to have had no motives but what came home to the bosoms and businesses of men; to every manly, generous, and honest feeling; that might not have been uttered boldly without fear of contradiction in the face of an enemy; that must not have beat in every heart, have strung every arm, and animated every tongue. If the situation of the country was believed to be at all precarious; if there was even a chance that the contest might really lead to the dreadful alternative held out to us, the want either of cautious prudence or of manly wisdom in ministers was at that time inexcusable. It is no part of wisdom to hang the fate of kingdoms in the balance with straws. It is no part of courage to fight, to show that you are not afraid of fighting. Calm steady courage does not distrust itself; nor is it afraid that by giving up a trifling or doubtful point, it may afterwards be bullied into dangerous compliances. Firmness and moderation seem to me not only not incompatible with each other, but that the one is a necessary consequence of the other. On the other hand, meanness and pride are nearly allied together. In common life we should think that a readiness to seize the first occasion of quarrel shewed a man to be either a bully or a coward; it would seem as if he was afraid that by deferring his resentment he should either want courage or opportunity for shewing it another time. Yet the great excuse for our going into the war was,—that by yielding any thing to the demands of the

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enemy, we should soon lose all power of resistance, and crouch in abject submission at his feet. This was not a proud confidence in ourselves, but a mean dread of our own pusillanimity and want of firmness. It was to suppose that we had no security for our firmness, but in the heat of our passions and the infliction of mutual injuries. But it may be said, that whatever was the cause of the war, the consequences were the same. The critical situation in which we stood, and the threats of the enemy made it necessary for us to repel force by force, to call forth every energy of which we were possessed, and to stand forth as one man in defence of the country. But whatever this might prove as to the conduct of the people, it forms no justification of the conduct of ministers. It was not the danger of invasion which produced the taking up arms, but the determination to take up arms which produced the fear of invasion. The threatened invasion was not the cause of the war, but the consequence of it. This reasoning, as applied to the commencement of the war is preposterous. It is the same absurdity as to give yourself an infectious disease in order that you may call in the physician, instead of calling in the physician because you are attacked by the disease. It is ridiculous, I say, to argue that the war was necessary to repel the horrors and ravages of invasion; when, if the war had not taken place, no such evils would have been possible. It was true, that so long as we determined to carry on the war, it was necessary to guard ourselves against the consequences of war; but to suppose (which seemed to be generally the case with the good people of England in the height of their panic) that to doubt for a moment of the necessity of the war was the same thing as wishing that the French might come here and put every one to the sword (when one chief object of peace would be to pre-

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vest all such wild alarms), implies such an intricate confusion of ideas as I am not able to unravel. At least I can account for it only in one way; by supposing that this reluctance to distinguish between the necessity of our going to war, and the necessity of self-defence, brought upon us by it, arose from a deep consciousness in the human mind of the importance of the motives by which we have been actuated to the success of our undertakings, and a belief that he who lessens your confidence in the grounds of your proceeding, thereby unnerves your resolution, and lessens your safety. I know that immediate danger, however incurred, produces the same necessity for self defence; but it does not produce the same temper of mind and motives for going through it. It may also produce the same mechanical courage at the moment; but perseverence, superiority to fear or disaster, self-confidence, a cheerful determined submission to the greatest hardships and sufferings from a sense that they were unavoidable, "the unconquerable will, and courage never to submit or yield, and what else is not to be overcome;" all these are not in the gift of fear, or folly, or ignorance, or hatred. It is therefore of the highest consequence to ascertain the true grounds and motives of a war, such as the present, and to know the spirit and sentiments by which it was brought about, and to what part of our character, whether to its strong or its weak side, whether to our vices or our virtues, those motives were addressed which called forth our ardour and readiness to engage in it. It is not from loud boasting, from what we think or say of ourselves, but from what we really are; not from a pretended, but real love of justice, of independence, of honour, and of our country's welfare, that we can expect the fruits of victory. If we find in those who lead, no higher principle of action than a wish to

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serve their own interests, or gratify their own passions, and in those who are led, only that zeal which arises from the drunken uproar of an ale-house, the low credulity of ignorance, or the idle vanity of wearing a red coat and shouldering a firelock—I will not say that the situation of the country is desperate indeed, but I think it is not such as to afford the most solid grounds of confidence in our security against a spirit of unbounded ambition; the insolence of almost unexampled success, resentment for supposed injuries, and the most consummate military skill. "The still small voice is wanting." . . . . . It is not in the order of nature that an administration acting upon such principles as I have here described should feel, or be capable of inspiring into others, either true patriotism, a sincere and manly spirit of independence, or any particle of that high-souled energy, which is necessary to contend with inordinate ambition, armed with strength and cunning. That administration is no more: I trust that its spirit has not survived it!

It seems almost impertinent at present to turn back to the diplomatic pedantry and legal quibbling by which the retention of Malta was so gravely justified at the time. After the repeated declarations that have been made in parliament, and after having witnessed those tragical events, to which, it seems, it was the necessary prelude, there can be little doubt as to the real motives of that measure. From these motives then we are to form our opinion of the conduct of ministers. If it was a wise and necessary measure to plunge Europe again into the calamities of war, to bathe it once more in that "fountain of blood," then and then only was our refusing to fulfil our engagements a wise and necessary determination; for the now avowed reason of our going to war was, that we might not remain at peace! Here

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then was a war voluntarily undertaken for its own sake, peace studiously shunned, and all the evils consequent upon such a step incurred, for the sake of making one more desperate effort to reduce the power of France and humble it with the dust. We therefore entered upon this wild Quixotic scheme at our own peril, and the responsibility of the war devolved upon us. We ought therefore to have had strong grounds, either from a confidence in the result or from the justice of the principle, for making such an attempt. But we have seen what has been the result with respect to the other powers of Europe, it remains to be seen how it will terminate with respect to ourselves. As to the justice and generosity of the design, I may perhaps speak of that hereafter.

I will not pretend to censure the general practice of obtaining a war *under false pretences*, I leave it to the politicians to settle the rules of honour among themselves: but I cannot help thinking that in a war which is to try the spirit of a people, they ought not to be tricked, or bullied, or unnecessarily forced into it. With respect to the suspension of the war in consequence of the treaty of Amiens, it certainly had this good effect (on the supposition that it was absolutely necessary to go on with the contest), that it gave those who had been enemies of the old war, and had been afterwards disgusted by the conduct of the French, but did not like to relinquish their opinion while the original cause of dispute remained—it gave all persons of this class (of which there were great numbers) an opportunity to quit the ranks of discontent without exposing themselves to the charge of inconsistency. As it was a new war, they thought they had a fair right to have a new opinion about it; and they exercised their freedom of election as eagerly in approving the conduct of ministers in entering upon the present war, as they had done in condemning their

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continuance of the former one. For myself, I confess I have always looked upon the present war as a continuance of the last, carried on upon the same principles and for the same purposes, only without any hopes of success, and therefore infinitely more wanton and foolish. For as, in the commencement of the last war, it was our intention to conquer France, in this we can only hope to defend ourselves. Of the necessity of this defence there can be but one opinion. But to confound this with the necessity of the war itself, or to argue as if the discontinuance of the war would increase the dangers arising from it, is an improvement in political logic, a luminous arrangement of ideas, that must have crept in with the benefits of the Union.

The first plea that was made use of to give a colouring of interest to the renewal of hostilities, before the discovery of that profound train of policy, the explosion of which has left Europe a heap of ruins, was, that after the incautious surrender of Malta, it had been found to be of much greater importance to Great Britain than had been imagined at the time; and that it could not be suffered to fall into the hands of the French, or even become subject to their influence, without endangering one of the chief sources of the wealth and prosperity of this country. It seems Malta was the enchanted island, into which Buonaparte was to convey himself by stealth, and thence passing easily into Egypt was, at another vast stride, to come down *souse* upon our possessions in India. With these resting-places, and the help of the thousand-league boots which our imagination had lent him, the political magician was to take but a hop, step and a jump, from one hemisphere into the other. Or, in the language of the day, Malta was the key to Egypt, and Egypt was the key to our Eastern conquests. Both the points assumed in this statement were directly

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denied, and their fallacy exposed at the time by one to whose authority or reasonings on the subject I can add nothing; but I may be permitted to make one general remark with respect to this part of the subject, that if the mere possibility of the loss of an object of national aggrandisement is to be considered as a sufficient ground of war, there never could be such a thing as peace among mankind. If one party is to be kept in a state of perpetual alarm from a distant apprehension of losing the superiority they possess in wealth, or luxury, or power, and the other to be perpetually goaded on by the hope of speculative plunder; if one party is determined to forgo nothing, and the other to grasp at everything; if future causes of contention are to be anticipated, and we are to fight now to defend an object that may never come into dispute hereafter; if we are not to wait till we see and feel our danger, but to create it out of every fantastic occasion; if our selfishness must be of that refined calculating comprehensive kind as to overlook no possibility of danger or advantage however remote or uncertain, and at the same time so inflexibly disinterested as to think no sacrifices too great in pursuit of its favourite object—it is easy to see that the world would soon be dispeopled. It is well for mankind that our passions naturally circumscribe themselves, and contain their own antidote within them. The only excuse for our narrow, selfish passions is their shortsightedness: were it not for this, the jealousies of individuals and of nations would never leave them a moment's interval of rest or quiet. It is well that the headlong passions which make us rush on our own destruction and that of others are only excited by gross, palpable objects; and are therefore transient and limited in their operation. It is well that those motives which owe nothing to reason in their birth should not afterwards receive either nourishment

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and support from it. If in their present desultory state they produce so many mischiefs, what would be the case if they were to be organized into systems, and under the direction of pure abstract reason? Any object that provoked a momentary resentment or excited our jealousy might plunge us into a war that could only be expiated by seas of blood. But in a war of mere interest or passion, it is surely allowable to sit down and count the cost, and to strive to moderate our pride and resentment instead of inflaming them. Virtue, truth, and patriotism require nothing of us but an inviolable resolution and integrity in the defence of those rights which are the common privilege of humanity; the rest is a calculation of prudence, not a stern command of duty that admits neither of compromise or delay. To defend at the point of the sword, and at the risk of every thing valuable, our title to the possessions that are neither necessary nor durable in their own nature, that are never worth a hundred years' purchase, that may crumble to pieces of their own accord, or slip out of our hands in various ways before the end of the contest, and which afterwards will be no more secure "against infection and the hand of war," against the insidious or desperate designs of the enemy, against the breath of accident or unforeseen decay than they were before—is madness and folly. It is to defeat the intended favours of Fortune, by paying for them beforehand a price much greater than they can ever be worth. It is to squander away the whole estate of our present happiness and comfort in purchasing security for that, for which no security ever was or can be given—the continued smiles of fortune. We cannot without a presumption that will involve its own punishment think of placing beyond the reach of chance or fate that which by its own nature and the fluctuation of human affairs is liable to change.

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But this must be the case with all distant and maritime possessions: indeed all naval superiority is attended with this necessary disadvantage; that, though actual power, it is not self-dependent, or the source of its own permanence. We cannot secure the possession of the sea in the same manner by taking ships as we can the possession of the land by taking fortresses and countries. The longer a successful continental warfare is carried on, the more able is the conqueror to carry it on: every new conquest that he makes furnishes him with the means of making more, and secures to him what he has already gained by striking at the heart of power, by disarming resistance, and by very liberally rewarding the expence and trouble of keeping it—Whereas the advantages that are gained at sea are, like that element itself, infinitely treacherous and uncertain. We may take their ships; but this will not hinder them from building others. We cannot build forts or erect passes on the seas, or dig them into trenches to keep out the enemy. We cannot enter their country and cut down their forests; we cannot enter their ports and destroy their magazines;—all their means and sources of power remain untouched. We cannot prevent their exertions, though we may constantly render them abortive. Thus, while at an enormous expence we maintain our actual superiority, we make no advances to our object—which is security; but are rather further from it. If we ever make peace, which I suppose will happen sooner or later, we shall find that we have not in any one respect lessened the means or palsied the energies of our rivals; and while we remain at war we are teaching them two very dangerous things, resolution and skill. I conceive no power can be long superior to the attacks of another, unless where it has the means of crushing its resistance in embryo. Naval dominion is in this respect what a

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government would be that should give to insurgents a free communication with each other, full liberty of forming plans and of organizing themselves into regular bodies of troops, and the privilege of never being attacked till they themselves gave the signal for the onset. Military conquests are therefore in their nature to a certain degree secure; because in maintaining them we have to contend with those whom we have bound hand and foot, from whom we have taken all effectual power of resistance; while in maintaining our naval superiority, we strengthen our adversary by struggling with him, since he has the full use of every limb and muscle, has every inducement as well as opportunity to exert himself to the utmost, and is in no danger of receiving any material hurt; at least this must be the consequence where our natural strength and advantages are at all equal. I know nothing but some such reasoning as this on the inefficacy of naval advantages, as a means of reducing the enemy to terms of submission, that could form the least excuse for the late ministers in their desperate attempt to turn the course of the war from a channel in which it was sure to be successful, into one in which it was sure to be disastrous; to throw the game knowingly and wilfully into the enemy's hands, and ruin us in our allies. They seemed to anticipate with fatal apprehension the most splendid success that ever adorned the annals of the British navy, and to be determined by an inverted ambition to match it with a pattern, in their own style, of equal horror, discomfiture, and dismay. They seemed to conspire maliciously with fortune, in depriving Englishmen of the pure, unalloyed triumph of that day.—For the present, the errors of the cabinet have entirely defeated whatever advantages we might have derived from our naval success; and the effect of our mistaken policy has been, that while we remain undisputed masters of the seas, and are grasping at the

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commerce of the world, we see the ports of Europe about to be shut against us. War on the continent is therefore hopeless; war at sea useless, or worse than useless: for methinks there is neither policy nor wisdom nor humanity "in resolving to set no limits to your hostility but with your existence," when you have to contend with a great and formidable foe; when you only know that *he* is safe from your attacks; when you can only distress him, when you gain no advantage yourself in the mean time, and cannot possibly gain any that can be put in competition with such an alternative; when we consider that such a resolution (however heroically it may be formed) cannot be always persisted in (for the desire of peace is natural, and war revolting to the human mind); that the longer it is adhered to, the more mischievous it will become, and the more dangerous in its consequences afterwards, and will render the diminution of that maritime preponderance, which we have held with such a convulsive grasp, more and more an object both of policy and revenge to other powers.

I have promised to say something of the justice of the war in its principle, not as a war of defence but as a war of interference; though I think the less is said on this subject the better; it can only open "another Iliad of woes." It must lead to a train of recollections that can be of no use to us at present; or revive sentiments and a spirit that should be recalled only (if it were possible) to be disclaimed. The less we retain of a spirit of offence, and the sooner we forget ourselves in the character of aggressors, in however just a cause, the better shall we be qualified for our present posture of defence: for there is no ground of resistance so sure as a determined belief, for the time at least, that all aggression must be wrong. I am far from thinking that the arbitrary conduct of a government, even where it does not affect ourselves, is not a just ground of war, or that the

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conduct of the French government was not marked by a spirit of violent and unjust ambition. Of course if that spirit can be resisted with effect, there is no injustice, and there is a great deal of policy in doing it. But before we can plead generous indignation and an uncontrolable love of justice in excuse for our rashness and imprudence, it must be clear that pride, revenge, and the lust of dominion have had no share in producing this ardent concern for the rights and liberties of mankind. It is not the nature or justice of the occasion, but the use intended to be made of it; the principles and views on which we act, and the character of those with whom we are associated in a common cause, that gives us a right to arrogate to ourselves the title of assertors of the liberties of mankind. If, however, our motives are not such as to be above all suspicion, it is not enough that we are able to hide them from ourselves, unless we can at the same time impose upon those who have not the same interest in being deceived by the thin disguise that covers them. Instead then of enquiring into the abstract justice of the war (a sort of enquiry now very nearly exploded, and which would be of little use in guiding our practical conclusions), let us examine in what manner our remonstrances would be likely to be received by the government to whom they were addressed, and how far the common feelings of humanity would compel them "to bow their crested pride" at the feet of their accusers. Would they forget then that the undue and dangerous influence in the affairs of Europe, which was so loudly complained of, had been the consequence of the combined efforts of all Europe to accomplish their destruction, and was so far from being the cause of the hostility of other states, that it was their only security against it? That their unjust and tyrannical encroachments on the independence of the neigh-

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bouring states had been made in defending their own independence from the aggressions of which they were made the instruments? They would say, that to think of restoring the independence of those countries would be putting into the hands of a mortal enemy, whom you have just disarmed, the weapons with which he may most surely effect your destruction; that whatever advantages they had gained had been bought with their blood, shed for their country; that if there had been any instance of unjust aggression, or inordinate ambition, it might at least be *accounted for* from that natural jealousy of others, and that fierce impatience of control, that must become habitual to those who had had every kind of difficulty to encounter, and who had triumphed over all opposition. The gigantic strength and towering greatness of France had arisen from her convulsive struggles for existence, and in the cause of that liberty which was denied her. They, who had insulted her weakness and blasted her hopes, had no right to complain of her strength or her despair. Those who had not been able to make their country free and happy, would be instigated by a just revenge to make her great and formidable to her enemies. They might say, "You left us no choice between the highest point of glory, and the most abject submission; we must either be conquerors or slaves. If you gained an advantage, you pursued it; if you were defeated, you returned to the charge; neither success nor misfortune inclined you to listen to terms of accommodation: we saw that we could never hope for peace, but either by giving to France such an ascendancy as would overawe the rest of Europe, or by throwing ourselves at last on the mercy of our unrelenting foe. We had not forgotten the partition of Poland, the massacres of Ismael and Warsaw; and we could not satisfy ourselves but that those who

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had had the chief concern in these events, or had witnessed them without dismay, might have other objects in view in entering France, besides the tranquillity of the people, the restoration of order, or a disinterested regard for the safety of thrones, and the independence of Europe. We could not conceive that an implacable enmity to France was a full atonement for all other crimes, or a security for every virtue. Pursued, hunted down, driven to madness, we turned upon our pursuers, and trampled them under our feet; and in the career of our fury, and the plenitude of our triumph, you charge us with excesses, from which we ourselves were the greatest sufferers; and with not having observed those rules of justice and moderation, which reason required of us. We were to have no indemnity, no security: we were to give back every conquest, as soon as made; to fight every battle over again; to rely solely on the faith or generosity of our adversaries, as a pledge that no advantage would be taken of our confidence; or, if it were ten times betrayed, we were not to complain, as we had no right to advantages obtained by unjust violence, in a cause that exposed us to the enmity and detestation of the human race: we were to plead guilty to our own condemnation; to set the seal on our own infamy, and to receive as a mark of favour and lenity, whatever implied our admission into the common rank and privileges of mankind; and, after endless sacrifices and exertions, we were only to prepare for new struggles and insults, without ever hoping to end them. But from whom were we to learn this extreme moderation, or that respect for the rights of justice or the ties of humanity, which could be no defence to us? Why were we not to pursue the objects of our ambition, with the same obstinacy as those with whom we had to contend pursued the objects of their revenge? It could

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hardly be expected that all the concessions were to be made by those who were intoxicated with the pride of victory, in favour of those who had reaped nothing but disappointment, and who were only urged on by a sullen despair. In this manner was the war protracted, year after year, by open hostility, by civil dissentions, and pretended treaties; lingered out under various pretexts, which were artfully substituted for each other as occasion required, so as to make it impossible ever to arrive at any decisive issue to the contest. When defeated, the continuance of the war was necessary to their own defence and safety; when flushed with victory for a time, then nothing less than full indemnity for the past, as well as security for the future would satisfy them; and then their favourite object, the subjugation of France, and destruction of the republic, was resumed with fresh ardour, and tempted them on till their hopes again ended in defeat and ruin: thus adapting every aspect of affairs to their own purposes, they constantly returned in the same circle to the point from which they set out, and war was always necessary, peace always unattainable. Or if at any time the fainting resolution and exhausted strength of our adversaries seemed to promise us that repose which was so necessary to us, we saw the dying embers of war again eagerly rekindled by a country that, standing aloof from the contagion, shouted from her rocky shores to see the flames that consumed the vitals of Europe. The bitterest enmity that our early struggles in the cause of liberty had drawn down upon us was to be shewn by a people 'that had long insulted the slavery of Europe, by the loudness of its boasts of freedom.' English solicitation and English gold were always ready to defeat that object, which was to be the reward of so many triumphs, and of so many years of suffering, of havoc, uncertainty, and dis-

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may. A reluctant peace was at length extorted from her: but her jealousy, avarice, and pride made her choose to risk every thing rather than remain in a state so unnatural to her. Delicate in her moral sentiments, disinterested in all her proceedings, she was shocked at some violences of ours, which permitted her no longer to remain an indifferent spectator of the calamities of other nations, and she sought the first opportunity of evading the treaty that had been concluded, by alarming the fears of her merchants for the safety of their Eastern possessions. She lost no time in rousing to her aid her former confederates in wrong. By her incantations, the hydra-headed monster, which we thought we had finally subdued, again feels new life and vigour restored to it, unites its severed folds, and with its triple crown moves onward to its prey, and France must submit or perish, that England may preserve her commerce." In some such manner as this would a Frenchman repel the charges brought against his countrymen; and, if we allow for the strength of national prejudices, there appears to be some appearance of reason in what he says.[1] If the present quarrel had been so managed as to have been completely disentangled from the former one, we should have been better able to answer their reproaches, and I think to resist their menaces. Had not Austria been precipitated unwisely into that quarrel in the manner she was, she could not have fallen to the ground without a struggle.

In what further remarks I have to make, I shall consider whether the system of internal policy pursued by the late minister was in its general tendency likely to increase the spirit of independence, and consequently the security of the country. It seems to me a desirable

[1] As to the *real* grounds and views on which the former coalitions were begun and carried on, see Burke's Regicide Peace, Second Part.

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object to refer as much as possible of our proceedings both at home and abroad to the influence of that minister's character on the national feelings, and to the blind confidence generally placed in his talents and integrity. The errors that we have been led into by a confidence of this sort will be sooner retrieved than if they proceeded from a change in our own habits and dispositions. It is well if we can save the credit of our national character, a little at the expence of our understandings; for I cannot think that our confidence in that minister was well bestowed. I know it is a general maxim, that we are not to war with the dead. We ought not, indeed, to trample on their bodies; but with their *minds* we may and must make war, unless we would be governed by them after they are dead. They who wish their sentiments to survive them in the memories of men, must also expect to live in their censures.

The character of Mr. Pitt was, perhaps, one of the most singular that ever existed. With few talents, and fewer virtues, he acquired and preserved in one of the most trying situations, and in spite of all opposition, the highest reputation for the possession of every moral excellence, and as having carried the attainments of eloquence and wisdom as far as human abilities could go. This he did (strange as it appears) by a negation (together with the common virtues) of the common vices of human nature, and by the complete negation of every other talent that might interfere with the only one which he possessed in a supreme degree, and which indeed may be made to include the appearance of all others—an artful use of words, and a certain dexterity of logical arrangement. In these alone his power consisted; and the defect of all other qualities, which usually constitute greatness, contributed to the more complete success of these. Having no strong feelings, no distinct perceptions, his

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mind having no link, as it were, to connect it with the world of external nature, every subject presented to him nothing more than a *tabula rasa*, on which he was at liberty to lay whatever colouring of language he pleased; having no general principles, no comprehensive views of things, no moral habits of thinking, no system of action, there was nothing to hinder him from pursuing any particular purpose by any means that offered; having never any plan, he could not be convicted of inconsistency, aad his own pride and obstinacy were the only rules of his conduct. Having no insight into human nature, no sympathy with the passions of men, or apprehension of their real designs, he seemed perfectly insensible to the consequences of things, and would believe nothing till it actually happened. The fog and haze in which he saw every thing communicated itself to others, and the total indistinctness and uncertainty of his own ideas tended to confound the perceptions of his hearers more effectually than the most ingenious misrepresentation could have done. Indeed, in defending his conduct he never seemed to consider himself as at all responsible for the success of his measures, or that future events were in our own power; but that as the best laid schemes might fail, and there was no providing against all possible contingences, this was a sufficient excuse for our plunging at once into any dangerous or absurd enterprise without the least regard to consequences. His reserved logic confined itself solely to the *possible* and the *impossible*, and he appeared to regard the *probable* and *improbable*, the only foundation of moral prudence or political wisdom, as beneath the notice of a profound statesman; as if the pride of the human intellect were concerned in never entrusting itself with subjects, where it may be compelled to acknowledge its weakness.[1]

[1] One instance may serve as an example for all the rest:—When

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From his manner of reasoning, he seemed not to have believed that the truth of his statements depended on the reality of the facts, but that the things depended on the order in which he arranged them in words: you would not suppose him to be agitating a serious question, which had real grounds to go upon, but to be declaiming upon an imaginary thesis, proposed as an exercise in the schools. He never set himself to examine the force of the objections that were brought against his measures, or attempted to establish them upon clear, solid grounds of his own; but constantly contented himself with first gravely stating the logical form, or dilemma to which the question reduced itself, and then,

Mr. Fox last summer predicted the failure of the new confederacy against France, from a consideration of the circumstances and relative situation of both parties, that is, from an exact knowledge of the actual state of the case, Mr. Pitt contented himself with answering—and, as in the blindness of his infatuation, he seemed to think quite satisfactory,—"That he could not assent to the honourable gentleman's reasoning, for that it went to this, that we were never to attempt to mend the situation of our affairs, because in so doing we might possibly make them worse." No; it was not on account of this abstract possibility in human affairs, or because we were not absolutely sure of succeeding (for that any child might know), but because it was in the highest degree probable, or *morally* certain that the scheme would fail, and leave us in a worse situation than we were before, that Mr. Fox disapproved of the attempt. There is in this a degree of weakness and imbecility, a defect of understanding bordering on idiotism, a fundamental ignorance of the first principles of human reason and prudence, that in a great minister is utterly astonishing, and almost incredible. Nothing could ever drive him out of his dull forms, and naked generalities; which as they are susceptible neither of degree nor variation, are therefore equally applicable to every emergency that can happen: and in the most critical aspect of affairs he saw nothing but the same flimsy web of remote possibilities and metaphysical uncertainty. In his mind the wholesome pulp of practical wisdom and salutary advice was immediately converted into the dry chaff and husks of a miserable logic.

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after having declared his opinion, proceeded to amuse his hearers by a series of rhetorical common-places, connected together in grave, sonorous, and elaborately constructed periods, without ever shewing their real application to the subject in dispute. Thus if any member of the opposition disapproved of any measure, and enforced his objections by pointing out the many evils with which it is fraught, or the difficulties attending its execution, his only answer was, "that it was true there might be inconveniences attending the measure proposed, but we were to remember, that every expedient that could be devised might be said to be nothing more than a choice of difficulties, and that all that human prudence could do was to consider on which side the advantages lay; that for his part he conceived that the present measure was attended with more advantages and fewer disadvantages than any other that could be adopted; that if we were diverted from our object by every appearance of difficulty, the wheels of government would be clogged by endless delays and imaginary grievances; that most of the objections made to the measure appeared to him trivial, others of them unfounded and improbable; or that if a scheme free from all these objections could be proposed, it might after all prove inefficient; while, in the mean time, a material object remained unprovided for, or the opportunity of action was lost." This mode of reasoning is admirably described by Hobbes, in speaking of the writings of some of the Schoolmen, of whom he says, that "they had learned the trick of imposing what they list upon their readers, and declining the force of true reason by verbal forks, that is distinctions which signify nothing, but serve only to astonish the multitude of ignorant men." That what I have here stated comprehends the whole force of his mind, which consisted solely in this evasive

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dexterity and perplexing formality, assisted by a copiousness of words and common-place topics, will, I think, be evident to any one who carefully looks over his speeches, undazzled by the reputation or personal influence of the speaker. It will be in vain to look in them for any of the common proofs of human genius or wisdom. He has not left behind him a single memorable saying—not one profound maxim—one solid observation —one forcible description—one beautiful thought—one humourous picture—one affecting sentiment. He has made no addition whatever to the stock of human knowledge. He did not possess any one of those faculties which contribute to the instruction and delight of mankind—depth of understanding, imagination, sensibility, wit, vivacity, clear and solid judgment. But it may be asked, If these qualities are not to be found in him, where are we to look for them? And I may be required to point out instances of them. I shall answer then, that he had none of the profound, legislative wisdom, piercing sagacity, or rich, impetuous, high-wrought imagination of Burke; the manly eloquence, strong sense, exact knowledge, vehemence and natural simplicity of Fox; the ease, brilliancy, and acuteness of Sheridan. It is not merely that he had not all these qualities in the degree that they were severally possessed by his rivals, but he had not any of them in any degree. His reasoning is a technical arrangement of unmeaning common-places, his eloquence merely rhetorical, his style monotonous and artificial. If he could pretend to any one excellence in an eminent degree, it was to taste in composition. There is certainly nothing low, nothing puerile, nothing far-fetched or abrupt in his speeches; there is a kind of faultless regularity pervading them throughout; but in the confined, mechanical, passive mode of eloquence which he adopted, it seemed rather

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more difficult to commit errors than to avoid them. A man who is determined never to move out of the beaten road cannot lose his way. However, habit, joined to the peculiar mechanical memory which he possessed, carried his correctness to a degree which, in an extemporaneous speaker, was almost miraculous; he perhaps hardly ever uttered a sentence that was not perfectly regular and connected. In this respect, he not only had the advantage over his own contemporaries, but perhaps no one that ever lived equalled him in this singular faculty. But for this, he would always have passed for a common man; and to this the constant sameness, and, if I may say so, vulgarity of his ideas must have contributed not a little, as there was nothing to distract his mind from this one object of his unintermitted attention; and as even in his choice of words he never aimed at anything more than a certain general propriety and stately uniformity of style. His talents were exactly fitted for the situation in which he was placed; where it was his business not to overcome others, but to avoid being overcome. He was able to baffle opposition, not from strength or firmness, but from the evasive ambiguity and impalpable nature of his resistance, which gave no hold to the rude grasp of his opponents: no force could bind the loose phantom, and his mind (though "not matchless, and his pride humbled by such rebuke,") soon rose from defeat unhurt,

> "And in its liquid texture mortal wound
> Receiv'd no more than can the fluid air." [1]

By this lucky combination of strength and weakness, he succeeded in maintaining an undiminished influence over the opinions of his own country for a number of

[1] I would recommend to the reader a masterly and unanswerable essay on this subject in the Morning Post, by Mr. Coleridge, in February 1800, from which, and the conversation of the author, most

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years, in wielding her energies as he pleased, and guiding the counsels of almost all Europe. With respect to his influence on the continent, that is an illusion that is past, and not worth inquiring about; but it may still be of some use to inquire by what means he strengthened his influence at home, as this may more immediately concern our future conduct. This I think he effected in two ways: by lessening the free spirit of the country as much as he could, and by giving every possible encouragement to its commercial spirit. I shall not here examine how far both these designs were wise and salutary at the time; but I conceive that neither a spirit of dependence nor an unbounded and universal spirit of trade will be the best security for our safety at present. An indifference to liberty is not likely to increase the love of independence; nor is an exclusive regard to private gain likely to produce a disinterested concern for the public welfare. Mr. Pitt, in making war, always considered peace as an object perfectly indifferent in itself; and, in

of the above remarks are taken. I will only add, that it is the property of true genius to force the admiration even of enemies. No one was ever hated or envied for his powers of mind, if others were convinced of their real excellence. The jealousy and uneasiness produced in the mind by the display of superior talents almost always arises from a suspicion that there is some trick or deception in the case, and that we are imposed on by an appearance of what is not really there. True warmth and vigour communicate warmth and vigour; and we are no longer inclined to dispute the inspiration of the oracle, when we feel the "presens Divus" in our own bosoms. But when, without gaining any new light or heat, we only find our ideas thrown into perplexity and confusion by an art that we cannot comprehend, this is a kind of superiority which must always be painful, and can never be cordially admitted. For this reason the extraordinary talents of Mr. Pitt were always viewed, except by those of his own party, with a sort of jealousy, and *grudgingly* acknowledged; while those of his rivals were admitted by all parties in the most unreserved manner, and carried by acclamation.

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securing the prerogative of the crown, seemed to think that the privileges of the people did not deserve a moment's attention. I do not in this mean to condemn his conduct: perhaps we may suppose that the restrictions which he introduced on the liberty of the subject, and the spirit of passive obedience and non-resistance which was every where industriously diffused, the contempt and obloquy which were poured on the very name of liberty, might be required by the circumstances of the time, and necessary to prevent the contagion of a dangerous example, and the mischiefs of civil anarchy and confusion. The public were perhaps justly surfeited with metaphysical treatises overturning the foundation of all civil rights, and the very notion of liberty, with historical disquisitions proving that the popular spirit of political institutions was the bane of all internal quiet and happiness, the source of endless violence and bloodshed, and the final cause of their dissolution; that human happiness could never reach its utmost point of perfection but under the mild and tranquil reign of universal despotism; that the forms of all governments were alike indifferent, provided they secured the same servile obedience and death-like apathy in the state. Perhaps it was then necessary that we should be told, *ex cathedrâ*, that the people had nothing to do with the laws but to *obey* them: perhaps it was right that we should be amused with apologies for the corrupt influence of the crown; that integrity, honour, the love of justice, public spirit, or a zeal for the interests of the community should be laughed at as absurd chimeras, and that an ardent love of liberty, or determined resistence to powerful oppression should be treated as madness and folly. But however wise or necessary a temporary fashion of this kind might be to counteract the poison of other views and sentiments, I am sure it can

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neither be wise nor safe to continue it at present. We ought to do every thing in our power to get rid of the effects of so dangerous a habit as soon as possible. The fewer curbs there are on the spirit of the people, the more vigorous and determined will it shew itself; the greater the encouragement that is given to the principles of liberty, and the greater confidence that is placed in the general disposition of the country, the greater and more irresistible will be their habitual attachment to liberty and independence. You give a manifest advantage to an enemy if you in any way lessen the sources of enthusiasm, or in any way check the ardour, confine the energy, degrade the sentiments, or discountenance the erect, manly, independent spirit of your country. It is dangerous to let any thing fall into disrepute or contempt which may serve as a watch-word to startle the dull ear, or rouse the frozen blood; but to this purpose it is not enough that the name is retained, if the habitual feeling is destroyed. A tame acquiescence in every encroachment of power or exertion of undue influence, a disposition to assert our own rights or those of others no further than fear or interest permit, a habit of looking on the welfare of our country or the rights of mankind as secondary considerations, no further to be regarded than as they are connected with our own danger or convenience, these are not the symptoms of the durable greatness and independence of a people. The causes of the ruin of states have been almost always laid in the relaxation of their moral habits and political prejudices. No kingdom can be secure in its independence against a greater power that is not free in its spirit, as well as in its institutions. I shall be happy if I have been mistaken in thinking these observations at all applicable to our own country: but the observations themselves are serious, and worth attending to. They are

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such as have been recognised in all nations and ages, except those indeed where their having been so would have rendered them suspected.

On the other hand, a commercial spirit is a very weak as well as dangerous substitute for a spirit of freedom: a sense of self-interest, of mere mercenary advantage, can but ill supply the place of principle. The love of gain, however active or persevering this principle may be in accomplishing its own particular ends, can never be safely trusted to as an *ally* in a cause where there are other objects to be attended to. Men who are actuated by this sole principle will very obstinately, no doubt, defend their wealth, while they can retain it; but when that is no longer the case, they will think nothing else worth retaining, and meanly compromise their independence for their safety. That common birthright which they receive from nature, in which every Englishman has an equal interest as such, appears of little value in their eyes. Liberty is in their eyes a coarse, homely figure, but for the jewels that sparkle in her hair, and the rings on her fingers. It is inconceivable to them how a man can have any attachment to a simple shed, or can take any pride in his title to that respect, which is due to him only because he feels himself to be free. They will defend England as connected with her colonies, with her proud canopies of Eastern state, her distant spicy groves and the rich spoils of her Western isles; but will they defend her as she is England, as their country? Strip her of her conquests, her slaves, and her plantations, her bales of goods, her gold and silver, and leave her only herself, what would there be in all the rest worth the labour of a struggle? Her barren acres, her brave, simple, generous, honest-hearted, hardy race of men, her liberty, her fame, her integrity they look upon with the most sovereign contempt and indif-

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ference, and would be ready to sacrifice them all for the purchase of some new golden settlement, "some happier island in the watery waste—

> "Where slaves no more their native land behold,
> But fiends torment, and Christians thirst for gold."

They would defend their country not as her children, but as her masters; as a property, not as a state. There may be the same pride and luxury in other classes of men, but they are accompanied with other feelings, and drawn from other sources. It has been a customary compliment to consider those as best entitled to come forward conspicuously in defence of their country who had what is called the greatest *stake* in it. This is perhaps true of the real, old hereditary nobility and gentry, of those who find their names enrolled high in the annals of their country, whose affections have grown to her soil as it were in a long course of centuries, who have an interest in looking forward to posterity, and a pride in looking back upon their ancestors, who have not only present possessions and advantages to defend, but feelings of inveterate prejudice and inbred honour to defend them. The loss of respect, or of their former privileges, is a change which to them appears like something out of the course of nature, to which no force or accidental circumstances can ever reconcile them. They are also men of liberal education; and this is a great point gained. There is certainly this advantage in a classical education, if not counteracted by other causes, that it gives men long views; it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself, to love virtue for its own sake, to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches, and to fix our thoughts on the great and permanent instead of narrow and selfish objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and

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excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and to feel respect for that which is made venerable by its nature and antiquity instead of that low and servile dread which bows only to present power and upstart authority. It is hard to find in minds otherwise formed either a delicate sense of honour, or an inflexible regard to truth and justice. But the spirit of trade is the very reverse of all this. It is the principle of this set of men to cry "Long life to the conqueror," to feel a contempt for all obligations that are not founded in self-interest, and to consider all generous pursuits and the hope of unfading renown as romance and folly. "Virtue is not their habit, they are out of themselves in any course of conduct recommended only by conscience and glory." They would not give a hundred hogsheads of sugar or a half-year's income for all the posthumous fame that was ever acquired in the world. If things should unhappily ever come to extremities, they are not the people who will retrieve them, either by their exertions or example. They have neither grand and elevated views, nor the warm, genuine feelings of nature. They have no *principles* of action. Irresolute, temporizing, every thing is with them made a subject of selfish calculation. Their friendships as well as their enmities are the creatures of the occasion. Confident, insolent in the day of success, and while their cause is triumphant, they are as soon dejected and driven to despair, when they find the tide turned against them. Fortune is with them the first of goddesses: success the only title to authority and respect; and possession the truest right. Accustomed to all the fluctuations of hope and fear, they consider nothing stable in human affairs; thrown into the possession of power and affluence by accidents which they know not how to account for, it can hardly seem strange

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to them that they should again be stripped of them. They do not "lay the fault upon themselves but on their stars, that they are underlings." If I hear a man say that we are to give up our public principles whenever circumstances render it necessary, that we are to inquire upon all occasions not what is right, but what is prudent to be done, that those feelings, which lead us to adhere to the cause of truth and justice if at all unpopular, or to incur any personal risk or inconvenience in defeuding what is right, are weak and vulgar prejudices, I know that that man will be first to truckle to an enemy, and the last voluntarily to risk his life in defence of his independence.

The courage of the soldier and the citizen are essentially different. The one is momentary and involuntary; the other permanent and voluntary. It is one thing to do all in your power to repel danger when it is unavoidable, and another to expose yourself to it when you may avoid going into it. Fear, or rashness, or necessity may be supposed to kindle all the fury of battle: but principle alone can make us willing to return to the charge after defeat. It is for this *reaction* that we ought to be chiefly prepared. For this nothing can prepare us but a true love of our country, not taken up as a fashion, but felt as a duty; a spirit of resistance not measured by our convenience, but by the strength of our attachment and the real value of the object; but steady enthusiasm; but a determination never to submit while hope or life remained, and an indifference to every thing else but that one great object.

What resistance has Holland ever made to the power of France from the first moment? Commerce had spread its sordid mantle completely over her. Wrapped closely up in this, she fell without resistance and without a groan: she was not of a temper to fall in love with

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danger, to court disasters. Since that time she has not made a struggle or breathed a sigh for her release, but lies supine, secure, unmoved, and torpid,

> "Dull as her lakes that slumber in the storm."

Two hundred years of commerce and riches, which had gone over her, since, in that noble struggle for thirty years together, she had defied the whole power and the utmost vengeance of Spain, had prepared her for this striking change. But England is not yet quite commercial: the spirit of trade has not spread its poison through the whole mass of our blood and vital juices! As I do not wish that England (with all her high hopes, and called to a far different destiny) may *ever* share the fate of Holland, I do not wish that she may ever resemble her in herself; that every other feeling should give way to that of interest alone, but that she may tremble at ever realizing the warning picture of the poet,

> ——"When, stript of all her charms,
> The land of scholars, and the nurse of arms,
> Where noble stems transmit the patriot flame,
> Where kings have toil'd and poets wrote for fame,
> One sink of level avarice shall lie,
> And scholars, soldiers, kings, unhonour'd die."

Though a state cannot look to its commerce for its security, it may be involved in endless difficulty and danger by the views of commercial aggrandizement. The views of men wholly engrossed in such pursuits are altogether low and mechanical. If they see far, it is always in a straight line before them; their sagacity is confined to what immediately concerns their own interest. They are so intent upon that one object that they overlook every thing else; and their eagerness to accumulate is such, that they would rather hazard all than relinquish a pursuit which promises them some new acquisition. While they are successful, it is impossible

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to persuade them that they ever can be otherwise, or to restrain their rashness by any considerations of prudence or humanity. Actuated only by gross, palpable objects, and full of themselves, they laugh at all distant danger. All general reasonings on the principles of human nature, or the operation of causes by which they do not find themselves influenced, appear to them perfectly futile and visionary. "They think there is nothing real but that which they can handle; which they can measure with a two-foot rule, which they can tell upon ten fingers." As they believe money to be the only substantial good, they are also persuaded that it is the only instrument of power. With this they think themselves invulnerable, and that the more of it they have, the more secure they are. As long as their credit remains unimpaired, and their remittances are regularly made, they consider the fate of battles and the intrigues of cabinets as of very little comparative importance. They look up with more awe and admiration to a stock-jobbing broker surrounded with his clerks than they do to a victorious general at the head of his army. The rise and fall of stocks, and the demand for our manufactures abroad, are in their opinion the only criterions of national prosperity. On the other hand, whatever affects their own interest, the loss of an island, or the stopping up of a port, is found immediately to threaten the ruin of the country. Their fears are as rash and groundless as their confidence. Every thing in which they themselves are concerned is viewed through a magnifying medium, and demands all our vigilance and attention, while every thing else dwindles into insignificance. I therefore think there ought to be as little connection as possible between the measures of government and the maxims of the Exchange, and that the interests of a great empire ought not to be managed by a company of factors.

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I have thus expressed the sentiments which occurred to me on the present situation of our affairs, and some of the steps which led to it. I have done this as freely and unreservedly as I could, because if they are wrong, it is not likely that they will be much attended to; but if they are right, they may be of some use. And I conceive that even they who may think the view I have taken of the measures of the last administration, and the application of particular observations to our own conduct altogether unfounded, will not deny the truth of the general principles on which they are built. Or that the sentiments of justice, of honour, of reason and liberty, by which I think our views and conduct *ought* to have been regulated, can be too deeply impressed on our minds.

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A LETTER

TO

WILLIAM GIFFORD, ESQ.,

FROM

WILLIAM HAZLITT, ESQ.

(1819.)

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[The title of the original edition of this tract, now become rare, is :— *A Letter to William Gifford, Esq. From William Hazlitt, Esq.* "*Fit pugil, et medicum urget.*" *London: Printed for John Miller, Burlington Arcade, Piccadilly.* 1819. *Price Three Shillings.* My copy belonged to the author, and has on the title-page "W. H. March, 1819," and a short list of *Errata* at the back in the same hand.

In the following year a new title was printed to the unsold copies, with *Second Edition* upon it, and at the foot, "London: Printed for Robert Stodart, 81, Strand. 1820." I have a copy of this reissue, which belonged to John Hunt, and has a few MS. notes by him.

As to the publication and the circumstances which led to it, see *Memoirs of Hazlitt*, 1867, i., 242 *et seqq.*—ED.]

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A LETTER

TO

WILLIAM GIFFORD, ESQ.

SIR,

YOU have an ugly trick of saying what is not true of any one you do not like; and it will be the object of this letter to cure you of it. You say what you please of others: it is time you were told what you are. In doing this, give me leave to borrow the familiarity of your style:—for the fidelity of the picture I shall be answerable.

You are a little person, but a considerable cat's-paw; and so far worthy of notice. Your clandestine connexion with persons high in office constantly influences your opinions, and alone gives importance to them. You are the *Government Critic*, a character nicely differing from that of a government spy—the invisible link, that connects literature with the police. It is your business to keep a strict eye over all writers who differ in opinion with his Majesty's Ministers, and to measure their talents and attainments by the standard of their servility and meanness. For this office you are

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well qualified. Besides being the Editor of the Quarterly Review, you are also paymaster of the band of Gentlemen Pensioners; and when an author comes before you in the one capacity, with whom you are not acquainted in the other, you know how to deal with him. You have your cue beforehand. The distinction between truth and falsehood you make no account of: you mind only the distinction between Whig and Tory. Accustomed to the indulgence of your mercenary virulence and party-spite, you have lost all relish as well as capacity for the unperverted exercises of the understanding, and make up for the obvious want of ability by a bare-faced want of principle. The same set of thread-bare common-places, the same second-hand assortment of abusive nick-names, the same assumption of little magisterial airs of superiority, are regularly repeated; and the ready convenient lie comes in aid of the dearth of other resources, and passes off, with impunity, in the garb of religion and loyalty. If no one finds it out, why then there is no harm done, *snug's the word;* or if it should be detected, it is a good joke, shews spirit and invention in proportion to its grossness and impudence, and it is only a pity that what was so well meant in so good a cause, should miscarry! The end sanctifies the means; and you keep no faith with heretics in religion or government. You are under the protection of the *Court;* and your zeal for your king and country entitles you to say what you chuse of every public writer who does not do all in his power to pamper the one into a tyrant, and to trample the other into a herd of slaves. You derive your weight with the great and powerful from the very circumstance that takes away all real weight from your authority, *viz.* that it is avowedly, and upon every occasion, exerted for no one purpose but to hold up to hatred and contempt whatever opposes in the

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slightest degree and in the most flagrant instances of abuse their pride and passions. You dictate your opinions to a party, because not one of your opinions is formed upon an honest conviction of the truth or justice of the case, but by collusion with the prejudices, caprice, interest or vanity of your employers. The mob of well-dressed readers who consult the Quarterly Review, know that *there is no offence in it.* They put faith in it because they are aware that it is "false and hollow, but will please the ear;" that it will tell them nothing but what they would wish to believe. Your reasoning comes under the head of Court-news; your taste is a standard of the prevailing *ton* in certain circles, like Ackerman's dresses for May. When you damn an author, one knows that he is not a favourite at Carlton House. When you say that an author cannot write common sense or English, you mean that he does not believe in the doctrine of *divine right.* Of course, the clergy and gentry will not read such an author. Your praise or blame has nothing to do with the merits of a work, but with the party to which the writer belongs, or is in the inverse *ratio* of its merits. The dingy cover that wraps the pages of the Quarterly Review does not contain a concentrated essence of taste and knowledge, but is a receptacle for the scum and sediment of all the prejudice, bigotry, ill-will, ignorance, and rancour, afloat in the in the kingdom. This the fools and knaves who pin their faith on you know, and it is on this account they pin their faith on you. They come to you for a scale not of literary talent but of political subserviency. They want you to set your mark of approbation on a writer as a thorough-paced tool, or of reprobation as an honest man. Your fashionable readers, Sir, are hypocrites as well as knaves and fools; and the watch-word, the practical intelligence they want, must be conveyed to them

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without implied offence to their candour and liberality, in the *patois* and gibberish of fraud of which you are a master. When you begin to jabber about common sense and English, they know what to be at, shut up the book, and wonder that any respectable publisher can be found to let it lie on his counter, as much as if it were a Petition for Reform. Do you suppose, Sir, that such persons as the Rev. Gerard Valerian Wellesley and the Rev. Weeden Butler would not be glad to ruin what they call a Jacobin author as well as a Jacobin stationer?[1] Or that they will not thank you for persuading them that their doing so in the former case is a proof of their taste and good sense, as well as loyalty and religion? You know very well that if a particle of truth or fairness were to find its way into a single number of your publication, another Quarterly Review would be set up to-morrow for the express purpose of depriving every author, in prose or verse, of his reputation and livelihood, who is not a regular hack of the vilest cabal that ever disgraced this or any other country.

There is something in your nature and habits that fits you for the situation into which your good fortune has thrown you. In the first place, you are in no danger of exciting the jealousy of your patrons by a mortifying display of extraordinary talents, while your sordid devotion to their will and to your own interest at once ensures their gratitude and contempt. To crawl and lick the dust is all they expect of you, and all you can do. Otherwise they might fear your power, for they could have no dependence on your fidelity: but they

[1] See the *Examiner*, Feb. 9. [Case of Rogers, stationer in Sloane Street, for whom a subscription was afterwards raised by the proprietors of the *Examiner*.—MS. note by John Hunt in his copy of the issue of 1820.—Ed.]

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take you with safety and fondness to their bosoms; for they know that if you cease to be a tool, you cease to be any thing. If you had an exuberance of wit, the unguarded use of it might sometimes glance at your employers; if you were sincere yourself, you might respect the motives of others; if you had sufficient understanding, you might attempt an argument, and fail in it. But luckily for yourself and your admirers, you are but the dull echo, "the tenth transmitter" of some hackneyed jest: the want of all manly and candid feeling in yourself only excites your suspicion and antipathy to it in others, as something at which your nature recoils: your slowness to understand makes you quick to misrepresent; and you infallibly make nonsense of what you cannot possibly conceive. What seem your wilful blunders are often the felicity of natural parts, and your want of penetration has all the appearance of an affected petulance!

Again, of an humble origin yourself, you recommend your performances to persons of fashion by always abusing *low people*, with the smartness of a lady's waiting woman, and the independent spirit of a travelling tutor. Raised from the lowest rank to your present despicable eminence in the world of letters, you are indignant that any one should attempt to rise into notice, except by the same regular trammels and servile gradations, or should go about to separate the stamp of merit from the badge of sycophancy. The silent listener in select circles, and menial tool of noble families, you have become the oracle of Church and State. The purveyor to the prejudices or passions of a private patron succeeds, by no other title, to regulate the public taste. You have felt the inconveniences of poverty, and look up with base and groveling admiration to the advantages of wealth and power: you have had to contend with the

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mechanical difficulties of a want of education, and you see nothing in learning but its mechanical uses. A self-taught man naturally becomes a pedant, and mistakes the means of knowledge for the end, unless he is a man of genius; and you, Sir, are not a man of genius. From having known nothing originally, you think it a great acquisition to know any thing now, no matter what or how small it is—nay, the smaller and more insignificant it is, the more curious you seem to think it, as it is farther removed from common sense and human nature. The collating of points and commas is the highest game your literary ambition can reach to, and the squabbles of editors are to you infinitely more important than the meaning of an author. You think more of the letter than the spirit of a passage; and in your eagerness to show your minute superiority over those who have gone before you, generally miss both. In comparing yourself with others, you make a considerable mistake. You suppose the common advantages of a liberal education to be something peculiar to yourself, and calculate your progress beyond the rest of the world from the obscure point at which you first set out. Yet your overweening self-complacency is never easy but in the expression of your contempt for others; like a conceited mechanic in a village ale-house, you would set down every one who differs from you as an ignorant blockhead; and very fairly infer that any one who is beneath yourself must be nothing. You have been well called an Ultra-Crepidarian[1] critic. From the difficulty you yourself have in constructing a sentence of common grammar, and your frequent failures, you instinctively presume that no author who comes under the lash of your pen can understand his mother-

[1] See *Ultra-Crepidarius*, by Leigh Hunt, 1825.—MS. note by John Hunt.

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tongue: and again, you suspect every one who is not your "very good friend" of knowing nothing of the Greek or Latin, because you are surprised to think how you came by your own knowledge of them. There is an innate littleness and vulgarity in all you do. In combating an opinion, you never take a broad and liberal ground, state it fairly, allow what there is of truth or an appearance of truth, and then assert your own judgment by exposing what is deficient in it, and giving a more masterly view of the subject. No: this would be committing your powers and pretensions where you dare not trust them. You know yourself better. You deny the meaning altogether, misquote or misapply, and then plume yourself on your own superiority to the absurdity you have created. Your triumph over your antagonists is the triumph of your cunning and mean-spiritedness over some nonentity of your own making; and your wary self-knowledge shrinks from a comparison with any but the most puny pretensions, as the spider retreats from the caterpillar into its web.

There cannot be a greater nuisance than a dull, envious, pragmatical, low-bred man, who is placed as you are in the situation of the Editor of such a work as the Quarterly Review. Conscious that his reputation stands on very slender and narrow grounds, he is naturally jealous of that of others. He insults over unsuccessful authors; he hates successful ones. He is angry at the faults of a work; more angry at its excellences. If an opinion is old, he treats it with supercilious indifference; if it is new, it provokes his rage. Every thing beyond his limited range of inquiry, appears to him a paradox and an absurdity: and he resents every suggestion of the kind as an imposition on the public, and an imputation on his own sagacity. He cavils at what he does not comprehend, and misrepresents what he knows to be

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true. Bound to go through the nauseous task of abusing all those who are not like himself the abject tools of power, his irritation increases with the number of obstacles he encounters, and the number of sacrifices he is obliged to make of common sense and decency to his interest and self-conceit. Every instance of prevarication he wilfully commits makes him more in love with hypocrisy, and every indulgence of his hired malignity makes him more disposed to repeat the insult and the injury. His understanding becomes daily more distorted, and his feelings more and more callous. Grown old in the service of corruption, he drivels on to the last with prostituted impotence and shameless effrontery; salves a meagre reputation for wit, by venting the driblets of his spleen and impertinence on others; answers their arguments by confuting himself; mistakes habitual obtuseness of intellect for a particular acuteness, not to be imposed upon by shallow appearances; unprincipled rancour for zealous loyalty; and the irritable, discontented, vindictive, peevish effusions of bodily pain and mental imbecility for proofs of refinement of taste and strength of understanding.

Such, Sir, is the picture of which you have sat for the outline:—all that remains is to fill up the little, mean, crooked, dirty details. The task is to me no very pleasant one; for I can feel very little ambition to follow you through your ordinary routine of pettifogging objections and barefaced assertions, the only difficulty of making which is to throw aside all regard to truth and decency, and the only difficulty in answering them is to overcome one's contempt for the writer. But you are a nuisance, and should be abated.

I shall proceed to shew, first, your want of common honesty, in speaking of particular persons; and, secondly, your want of common capacity, in treating of any general

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question. It is this double negation of understanding and principle that makes you all that you are.—As an instance of the summary manner in which you dispose of any author who is not to your taste, you began your account of the first work of mine you thought proper to notice (the Round Table), with a paltry and deliberate falsehood. I need not be at much pains to shew that your opinion on the merits of a work is not of much value, after I have shewn that your word is not to be taken with respect to the author. The charges which you brought against me as the writer of that work, were chiefly these four:—1st, That I pretended to have written a work in the manner of the Spectator; I answer, this is a falsehood. The Advertisement to that work is written expressly to disclaim any such idea, and to apologise for the work's having fallen short of the original intention of the projector (Mr. Leigh Hunt), from its execution having devolved almost entirely upon me, who had undertaken merely to furnish a set of essays and criticisms, which essays and criticisms were here collected together.—2. That I was not only a professed imitator of Addison, but a great coiner of new words and phrases: I answer, this is also a deliberate and contemptible falsehood. You have filled a paragraph with a catalogue of these new words and phrases, which you attribute to me, and single out as the particular characteristics of my style, not any one of which I have used. This you knew.—3. You say I write eternally about washerwomen. I answer, no such thing. There is indeed one paper in the Round Table on this subject, and I think a very agreeable one. I may say so, for it is not my writing. —4. You say that "I praise my own chivalrous eloquence:" and I answer, that's a falsehood; and that you knew that I had not applied these words to myself, because you knew that it was not I who had used them.

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The last paragraph of the article in question is true: for as if to obviate the detection of this tissue of little, lying, loyal, catch-penny frauds, it contains a cunning, tacit acknowledgment of them; but says, with equal candour and modesty, that it is not the business of the writer to distinguish (in such trifling cases) between truth and falsehood. That may be; but I cannot think that for the editor of the Quarterly Review to want common veracity, is any disgrace to me. It is necessary, Sir, to go into the details of this fraudulent transaction, this Albemarle-street hoax, that the public may know, once for all, what to think of you and me. The first paragraph of the Review is couched in the following terms.

"Whatever may have been the preponderating feelings with which we closed these volumes, we will not refuse our acknowledgments to Mr. Hazlitt for a few mirthful sensations," (that they were very few, I can easily believe,) "which he has enabled us to mingle with the rest, by the hint that his Essays were meant to be 'in the manner of the Spectator and Tatler.' The passage in which this is conveyed, happened to be nearly the last to which we turned; and we were about to rise from the Round Table, heavily oppressed with a recollection of vulgar descriptions, silly paradoxes, flat truisms, misty sophistry, broken English, ill humour, and rancorous abuse, when we were first informed of the modest pretensions of our host. Our thoughts then reverted with an eager impulse to the urbanity of Addison, his unassuming tone, and clear simplicity; to the ease and softness of his style, to the chearful benevolence of his heart. The playful gaiety too, and the tender feelings of his coadjutor, poor Steele, came forcibly to our memory. The effect of the ludicrous contrast thus presented to us, it would be somewhat difficult to describe. We think that it was akin to what we have felt from the admirable

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nonchalance with which Liston, in the complex character of a weaver and an ass, seems to throw away all doubt of his being the most accomplished lover in the universe, and receives, as if they were merely his due, the caresses of the fairy queen."—Quarterly Review, No. xxxiii. p. 154.

The advertisement prefixed to the Round Table, in which the hint is conveyed which afforded you "a few mirthful sensations," stood thus.—

"The following work falls somewhat short of its title and original intention. It was proposed by my friend Mr. Hunt, to publish a series of papers in the Examiner, in the manner of the early periodical essayists, the Spectator and Tatler. These papers were to be contributed by various persons on a variety of subjects; and Mr. Hunt, as the editor, was to take the characteristic or dramatic part of the work upon himself. I undertook to furnish occasional essays and criticisms; one or two other friends promised their assistance; but the essence of the work was to be miscellaneous. The next thing was to fix upon a title for it. After much doubtful consultation, that of THE ROUND TABLE was agreed upon, as most descriptive of its nature and design. But our plan had been no sooner arranged and entered upon, than Buonaparte landed at Frejus, *et voila la Table Ronde dissoute.* Our little Congress was broken up as well as the great one. Politics called off the attention of the Editor from the belles lettres; and the task of continuing the work fell chiefly upon the person who was least able to give life and spirit to the original design. A want of variety in the subjects, and mode of treating them, is, perhaps, the least disadvantage resulting from this circumstance. All the papers in the two volumes here offered to the public, were written by myself and Mr. Hunt, except a letter communicated by a friend in

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the sixteenth number. Out of the fifty-two numbers, twelve are Mr. Hunt's, with the signatures L. H. or H. T. For all the rest I am answerable. W. HAZLITT."

Such, Sir, is the passage to which you allude, with so much hysterical satisfaction, as having let you into the secret that I fancied myself to have produced a work "in the manner of the Spectator and Tatler;" and as having relieved you from the extreme uneasiness you had felt in reading through the "vulgar descriptions, silly paradoxes, flat truisms, misty sophistry, broken English, ill humour, and rancorous abuse," contained in the Round Table. If I had indeed given myself out for a second Steele or Addison, I should have made a very ludicrous mistake. As it is, it is you have made a very wilful misstatement. Your oppression, Sir, in rising from the Round Table, must have been great to put you upon so desperate an expedient to divert your chagrin, as that of affecting to suppose that I had said just the contrary of what I did say, in order that you might affect "a few mirthful sensations" at my expence. I cannot say that I envy you the little voluntary revulsion which your feelings underwent, at the ludicrous comparison which you fancy me to make between myself and Addison, on purpose to indulge the suggestions of your spleen and prejudice. These are among the last refinements, the *menus plaisirs* of hypocrisy, of which I must remain in ignorance. I will not require you to retract the assertion you have made, but I will take care before I have done, that any assertion you may make with respect to me shall not be taken as current. As to your praise of the Tatler and Spectator, I must at all times agree to it: but as far as it was meant as a tacit reproof to my vanity in comparing myself with these authors, it appears to have been unnecessary. You say elsewhere, speaking of some passage of mine—"Addison never wrote any thing

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so fine!"—and again that I fancy myself a finer writer than Addison. By your uneasy jealousy of the self-conceit of other people, it should seem that you are in the habit of drawing comparisons, "secret, sweet, and precious," between yourself and your "illustrious predecessors" not much to their advantage. As you have here thought proper to tell me what I do not think, I will tell you what I do think, which is, that you could not have written the passage in question, *On the Progress of Art*, because you never felt half the enthusiasm for what is fine.

2. After stating the pretensions of the work, you proceed to the style in which it is written.—"There is one merit which this author possesses besides that of successful imitation—he is a very eminent creator of words and phrases. Amongst a vast variety which have newly started up we notice 'firesider'—'kitcheny'—'to smooth up'—'to do off'—and 'to tiptoe down.' To *this* we add a few of the author's new-born phrases, which bear sufficient marks of a kindred origin to entitle them to a place by *their* side. Such is the assertion that Spenser 'was dipt in poetic luxury;' the description of 'a minute coil which clicks in the baking coal'—of 'a numerousness scattering an individual gusto'—and of 'curls that are ripe with sunshine.' *Our readers are perhaps by this time as much acquainted with the style of this author as they have any desire to be,*" &c.

I have nothing to do at present with the merits of the words or phrases, which you here attribute to me, and make the test of my general style, as if your readers truly if they persisted would find only a constant repetition of them in my writings. I say that they are not mine at all; that they are not characteristic of my style, that you knew this perfectly, and also that there were reasons which prevented me from pointing out this petty piece of chicanery; and farther, I say that I am so far

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from being "a very eminent creator of words and phrases," that I do not believe you can refer to an instance in any thing I have written in which there is a single new word or phrase. In fact, I am as tenacious on this score of never employing any new words to express my ideas, as you, Sir, are of never expressing any ideas that are not perfectly threadbare and commonplace. My style is as old as your matter. This is the fault you at other times find with it, mistaking the common idiom of the language for "broken English."

3. You say that "I write eternally about washerwomen;" and pray, if I did, what is that to you, Sir? There is a littleness in your objections which makes even the answers to them ridiculous, and which would make it impossible to notice them, were you not the Government-Critic. You say yourself indeed afterwards that "It is he" (Mr. Hunt) "who devotes *ten or twelve pages* to a dissertation on washerwomen." Good: what you say on this subject is a fair specimen of your mind and manners. The playing at fast-and-loose with the matter-of-fact may be passed over as a matter of course in your hypercritical lucubrations. There is but one half paper on this interdicted subject in the Round Table:—you have filled one page out of five of the article in the Review with a ridicule of this paper on account of the vulgarity of the subject, which offends you exceedingly; you recur to it twice afterwards *en passant*, and end your performance (somewhat in the style of a quack-doctor aping his own merry-andrew) with "two or three conclusive digs in the side at it." There is something in the subject that makes a strong impression on your mind. You seem "to hate it with a perfect hatred." [1] Now I would ask where is the harm

[1] "I hated my profession" (the business of a shoemaker, to which he was bound prentice) "with a perfect hatred." *See Mr. Gifford's*

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of this dissertation on washerwomen inserted in the Round Table, any more than those of Dutch and Flemish kitchen-pieces, the glossy brilliancy and high finishing of which must have become familiar to your eye in the collections of Earl Grosvenor,[1] Lord Mulgrave, and the Marquis of Stafford? What has Mr. Hunt done in this never-to-be forgiven paper to betray the lowness of his breeding or sentiments, or to shew that he who wrote it is "the droll or merry fellow of the piece," and that I who *did not write it* am "a sour Jacobin, who hate every thing but washerwomen?" Would Addison or Steele, "poor Steele" as you call him, have brought this as a capital charge against their "imitators?" Did they instinctively direct their speculations or limit their views of human life to "remarks on gentlemen and gentlewomen?" They often enough treated of low people and familiar life without any consciousness of degradation. "Their gorge did not rise" at the humble worth or homely enjoyments of their fellow-creatures, like your's. A coronet or a mitre were not the only things that caught their jaundiced eye, or soothed their rising gall. They who are always talking of high and low people are generally of a vulgar origin themselves, and of an inherent meanness of disposition which nothing can overcome. Besides, there is a want of good faith, as well as of good taste, in your affected fastidiousness on this point. "You assume a vice, though you have it not," or not to the degree, which your petulance and

Life of Himself prefixed to his Juvenal. He seems to have liked few things else better from that day to this. He tells us in the same work (though this is hardly what I should call being "a good hater") that he did not much like his father, and was not sorry when he died. This candid and amiable personage always overflowed with "the milk of human kindness."

[1] Mr. Gifford was private tutor to the present Earl Grosvenor.—*John Hunt* (1820).

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servility would have us suppose. A short time before you wrote this uncalled-for tirade against Mr. Hunt as an exclusive patroniser of that class of females, ycleped "washerwomen," he had quoted with praise in the Examiner, and as a mark of tender and humane feelings in the author, in spite of appearances to the contrary, the following epitaph from the Gentleman's Magazine.

"EPITAPH BY WILLIAM GIFFORD, ESQ.

We are no friends, publicly speaking, to the author of the following epitaph. We differ much with his politics, and with the cast of his satire; and do not think him, properly speaking, a poet, as many do. But we always admired the spirit that looked forth from his account of his own life, and the touching copy of verses on a departed friend, that are to be found in the notes to one of his satires; and there are feelings and circumstances in this world, before which politics and satire, and poetry, are of little importance"—(*How little knew'st thou of Calista!*)—"feelings, that triumph over infirmity and distaste of every sort, and only render us anxious, in our respect for them, to be thought capable of appreciating them ourselves. The world, with all its hubbub, slides away from before one on such occasions; and we only see humanity in all its better weakness, and let us add, in all its beauty.

The author will think what he pleases of this effusion of ours. It is an interval in the battle, during which we only wish to show ourselves fellow-men with him. Afterwards, he may resume his hostilities, if he has any, and we will draw our swords as before.

For the Gentleman's Magazine. Dec. 18, 1815.

Mr. Urban,—I am one of those who love to contemplate the "frail memorials" of the dead, and do not, therefore, count the solitary hours, occasionally spent in

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a church-yard, among the most melancholy ones of my life. But in London, this is a gratification rarely to be found; for, either through caution, or some less worthy motive, the cemeteries are closed against the stranger. I have been in the practice of passing by the chapel in South Audley-street, Grosvenor-square, almost every day, for several weeks, yet never saw the door of the burying-ground open till yesterday. I did not neglect the opportunity thus offered, but walked in. I found it far more spacious and airy than I expected; but I met with nothing very novel or interesting till I came to a low tomb, plain but neat, where I was both pleased and surprised by the following inscription, which, I believe, has never yet appeared in print, and which seems not unworthy of your miscellany. M. D.

Here lies the Body
of ANN DAVIES,
(for more than twenty years)
Servant to William Gifford.[1]
She died February 6, 1815,
in the forty-third year of her age,
of a tedious and painful malady,
which she bore
with exemplary patience and resignation.

Her deeply-afflicted master
erected this stone to her memory,
as a faithful testimony
of her uncommon worth,
and of his perpetual gratitude,
respect and affection,
for her long and meritorious services.

Though here unknown, dear Ann, thy ashes rest,
Still lives thy memory in one grateful breast,
That traced thy course through many a painful year,
And marked thy humble hope, thy pious fear.—
O! when this frame, which yet, while life remained,
Thy duteous love, with trembling hand, sustained,

[1] "Undoubtedly the translator of Juvenal."

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Dissolves (as soon it must) may that Bless'd Pow'r
Who beamed on thine, illume my parting hour!
So shall I greet thee, where no ills annoy,
And what was sown in grief, is reap'd in joy;
Where worth, obscured below, bursts into day,
And those are paid, whom Earth could never pay." [1]

It seems then, you can extract the pathetic though not the humorous, out of persons who are not "gentlemen or gentlewomen." It was the amiable weakness thus noticed, that made you take such pains to do away the suspicion of a particular partiality for low people. You could not afford "the frail memorial" of your private virtues to get beyond the inscription on a tomb-stone, or the poet's corner of the Gentleman's Magazine. The natural sympathies of the undoubted translator of Juvenal might be a prejudice to the official character of the anonymous editor of the Quarterly Review. You were determined to hear no more of this epitaph, and "other such dulcet diseases" [2] of yours.—You perhaps recollect, Sir, that the columns of the Examiner newspaper, which gave you such a premature or posthumous credit for some "compunctious visitings of nature," also contained the first specimen of the Story of Rimini. You seem to to have said on that occasion with Iago, "You are well tuned now,—but I'll set down the pegs that make this music, *as honest as I am.*"—That Mr. Hunt should have supposed it possible for a moment, that a government automaton was accessible to any thing like a liberal con-

[1] "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." Mr. Gifford here seems to exclude his band of gentlemen-pensioners, whom he pays on earth, from bursting with obscure worth into the realms of day. It is thus that Jacobin sentiments sprout from the commonest sympathy, and are even unavoidable in a government critic, when the common claims of humanity touch his pity or self-love.

[2] A quotation of Mr. Gifford's from Shakespeare. Yet he reproaches me with quoting from Shakespeare.

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cession, is one of those deplorable mistakes which constantly put men who are "made of penetrable stuff," at the mercy of those who are not. The amiable and elegant author of Rimini thought he was appealing to something human in your breast, in the recollection of your "Dear Ann Davies;" he touched the springs, and found them "stuffed with paltry blurred sheets" of the Quarterly Review, with notes from Mr. Murray, and directions how to proceed with the author, from the Admiralty Scribe. You retorted his sympathy with "one whom earth could never pay," by laughing to scorn his honest laborious "tub-tumbling viragos," whose red elbows and coarse fists presented so inelegant a contrast to the pining and sickly form whose loss you deplore. Is there any thing in your nature and disposition that draws to it only the infirm in body and oppressed in mind; or that, while it clings to power for support, seeks consolation in the daily soothing spectacle of physical malady or morbid sensibility? The air you breathe seems to infect; and your friendship to be a canker-worm that blights its objects with unwholesome and premature decay. You are enamoured of suffering, and are at peace only with the dead.—Even if you had been accessible to remorse as a political critic, Mr. Hunt had committed himself with you (past forgiveness) in your character of a pretender to poetry about town. The following lines in his Feast of the Poets, must have occasioned you "a few mirthful sensations," which you have not yet acknowledged, except by deeds.—

"A hem was then heard, consequential and snapping,
And a sour little gentleman walked with a rap in.
He bow'd, look'd about him, seem'd cold, and sat down,
And said,[1] 'I'm surpris'd that you'll visit this town:—
To be sure, there are one or two of us who know you,
But as for the rest, they are all much below you.

[1] To Apollo.

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So stupid, in general, the natives are grown,
They really prefer Scotch reviews to their own;
So that what with their taste, their reformers, and stuff,
They have sicken'd myself and my friends long enough.'
'Yourself and your friends!' cried the God in high glee;
'And pray my frank visitor, who may you be?'
'Who be?' cried the other; 'why really—this tone—
William Gifford's a name, I think pretty well known.'
'Oh—now I remember,' said Phœbus;—'ah true—
My thanks to that name are undoubtedly due:
The rod, that got rid of the Cruscas and Lauras,
—That plague of the butterflies—sav'd me the horrors;
The Juvenal too stops a gap in one's shelf,
At least in what Dryden has not done himself;
And there's something, which even distaste must respect,
In the self-taught example, that conquer'd neglect.
But not to insist on the recommendations
Of modesty, wit, and a small stock of patience,
My visit just now is to poets alone,
And not to small critics, however well known.'
So saying, he rang, to leave nothing in doubt,
And the sour little gentleman bless'd himself out."

Thus painters write their names at Co. For this passage and the temperate and judicious note which accompanies it, it is no wonder that you put the author—of Rimini, in Newgate, without the Sheriff's warrant. In order to give as favourable an impression of that poem as you could, you began your account of it by saying that it had been composed in Newgate, though you knew that it had not; but you also knew that the name of Newgate would sound more grateful to certain ears, to pour flattering poison into which is the height of your abject ambition. In this courtly innuendo which ushered in your wretched verbal criticism (it is the more disgusting to see such gross and impudent prevarication combined with such petty captiousness) you were guided not by a regard to truth, but to your own ends; and yet you say somewhere, very oracularly, out of contradiction

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to me, that "not to prefer the true to the agreeable, where they are inconsistent, is folly." You have mistaken the word: it is not folly, but knavery.[1]

4. You say you have no objection to my "praising my own chivalrous eloquence;" and I say that the insinuation is impertinent and untrue. The paper in which that phrase occurs is written by Mr. Hunt, as you know, and is an answer to some observations of mine on the poetical temperament in a preceding number *On the Causes of Methodism.* Mr. Hunt's having taken upon him "to praise my chivalrous eloquence," without consulting you, appeared no doubt a great piece of presumption; and you punished me by magnifying this indiscretion into the enormity of my having praised myself. I might as well say that Mr. Canning had made a fulsome eulogy on his own private virtues and public principles in your dedication of the edition of Ben Jonson to him.—You say indeed in the last paragraph of your criticism that "you understand some of the papers to be by Mr. Hunt; that it is he who is the droll or merry fellow of the piece; who has shocked you by writing eternally about washerwomen, &c. but that you cannot stay to distinguish between us, and that we must divide our respective share of merit between ourselves." The share of merit in that work may indeed be so small that it is of little consequence who has the

[1] Humanity stands as little in this author's way as truth when his object is to please. It was in the same spirit of unmanly adulation that he struck at Mrs. Robinson's lameness and "her crutches," with a hand, that ought to have been withered in the attempt by the lightning of public indignation and universal scorn. Mr. Sheridan once spoke of certain politicians in his day who "skulked behind the throne, and made use of the sceptre as a conductor to carry off the lightning of national indignation which threatened to consume them." There are certain small critics and poetasters who have always been trying to do the same thing.

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reversion of any part of it, but I will take care that a cat's-paw shall not be put on the pannel of my *quantum meruit*, nor take measure of my capacity with a mechanic rule, marked by ignorance and servility, nor turn the scale of public opinion by throwing in false weights as he pleases, nor make both of us ridiculous, by attributing to each the peculiarities of the other, with whatever exaggerated interpretation he chuses to put upon them. By this transposition of persons, which is not a matter of indifference as you pretend, you gain this advantage which you have no right to gain. You can at any time apply to me or Mr. Hunt the obnoxious points in your account of either, and improve upon them, as it suits your purpose. By combining the extremes of individual character, you make a very strange and wilful compound of your own. It is the same person, and yet it is not one person but two persons, according to the critical creed you would establish, who is a merry fellow, and a sour Jacobin; who is all gaiety and all gloom; a person who rails at poets, and yet is himself a poet; a hater of cats, and of cat's-paws;[1] a reviler of Mr. Pitt, and a panegyrist upon washerwomen. If, Sir, your friend, Mr. Hoppner, of whom, as you tell us[2] you discreetly said nothing, while he was struggling with obscurity, lest it should be imputed to the partiality of friendship, but whom you praised and dedicated to, as soon as he became popular, to shew your disinterestedness and

[1] This word is not very choice English: the character is not English.

[2] See the Mæviad, l. 365, &c.

> "I too, whose voice no claims *but truth's e'er mov'd*,
> Who long have seen thy merits, long have lov'd;
> Yet lov'd in silence, lest the rout should say,
> Too partial friendship tun'd the applausive lay;
> Now, now, that all conspire thy name to raise,
> May join the shout of unsuspected praise."

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deference to public opinion, if even this artist, whom you celebrate as a painter of flattering likenesses, had undertaken to unite in one piece the most striking features and characteristic expression of his and your common friends, had improved your lurking archness of look into Mr. Murray's gentle, downcast obliquity of vision;[1] had joined Mr. Canning's drooping nose to Mr. Croker's aspiring chin, the clear complexion (the *splendida bilis*) of the one, to the candid self-complacent aspect of the other; had forced into the same preposterous medley, the invincible *hauteur* and satanic pride of Mr. Pitt's physiognomy, with the dormant meaning and admirable nonchalance of Lord Castlereagh's features, the manly sleekness of Charles Long, and the monumental outline of John Kemble—what mortal would have owned the likeness!—I too, Sir, must claim the privilege of the *principium individuationis*, for myself as well as my neighbours; I will sit for no man's picture but my own, and not to you for that; I am not desirous to play so many parts as Bottom, and as to his ass's head which you would put upon my shoulders, it will do for you to wear the next time you shew yourself in Mr. Murray's shop, or for your friend Mr. Southey to take with him, whenever he appears at Court.

As to the difference of political sentiment between the writer of the Round Table and the writer of the article in the Review, which forms the heavy burthen of your flippant censure, I cannot consider that as an

[1] H. M. admitted that Mr. Murray *did* squint, but then no more than a gentleman might! If H. M. had at the same time informed us how much a gentleman ought to squint, he would have added considerably to our obligations.—*John Hunt*, in the copy of 1820. But this pleasantry, such as it is, had long before been current about Wilkes, I think.—Ed.

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accusation. You have many other objections to make: such as that, because Mr. Addison wrote some very pleasing papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination, I am not willing to fall short of "my illustrious predecessor;" and "accordingly," you say, "we hear much of poetry and of painting, and of music and of *gusto*." Is this the only reason you can conceive why any one should take an interest in such things; or did you write your Baviad and Mæviad that you might not fall short of Pope, your translation of Juvenal that you might surpass Dryden, or did you turn commentator on the poets, that you might be on a par with "your illustrious predecessors"—"from slashing Bentley down to piddling Theobalds?" Of Hogarth you make me say, quoting from your favourite treatise on washerwomen, that "he is too apt to perk morals and sentiments in your face." You cannot comprehend my definition of *gusto*, which you do not ascribe to any defect in yourself. My account of Titian and Vandyke's colouring, appears to you very odd, because it is like the things described, and you have no idea of the things described. If I had described the style of these two painters in terms applicable to them both, and to all other painters, you would have thought the precision of the style equal to the justness of the sentiment. A distinction without a difference satisfies you, for you can understand or repeat a common-place. It is the pointing out the real differences of things that offends you, for you have no idea of what is meant; and a writer who gets at all below the surface of a question, necessarily gets beyond your depth, and you can hardly contain your wonder at his presumption and shallowness. You quote half a dozen detached sentences of mine, as "convincing instances of affectation and paradox," (such as, *The definition of a true patriot is a good hater—He who speaks two*

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languages has no country, &c.) and which taken from the context to which they belong, and of which they are brought as extreme illustrations, may be so, but which you cannot answer in the connection in which they stand, and which you detach from the general speculation with which you dare not cope, to bring them more into the focus of your microscopic vision, and that you may deal with them more at ease and in safety on your old ground of literal and verbal quibbling.

You do not like the subjects of my Essays in general. You complain in particular of "my eager vituperation of good nature and good-natured people;" and yet with this you have, as I should take it, nought to do: you object to my sweeping abuse of poets, as (with the exception of Milton) dishonest men,[1] with which you have as little to do; you are no poet, and of course, honest! You do not like my abuse of the Scotch at which the Irish were delighted, nor my abuse of the Irish at which the Scotch were not displeased, nor my abuse of the English, which I can understand; but I wonder you should not like my abuse of the French. You say indeed that "no abuse which is directed against whole classes of men is of much importance," and yet you and your Anti-Jacobin friends have been living upon this sort of abuse for the last twenty years. You add with characteristic "no meaning"—"*If undeserved*, it is utterly impotent and may be well utterly despised." The last part of the proposition may be true, but abuse is not without effect, because undeserved, nor is a thing utterly impotent because it is thoroughly despicable. You, Sir, have power which is considerable, in proportion as it is despicable!

I confess, Sir, the Round Table did not take; "it was

[1] "To be honest as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand."—*Shakespeare.*

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Caviare to the multitude," but the reason, I think, was not that the abuse in it was undeserved, but that I have there spoken the truth of too many persons and things. In writing it, I preferred the true to the agreeable, which I find to be an unpardonable fault. Yet I am not aware of any sentiment in the work which ought to give offence to an honest and inquiring mind, for I think there is none that does not evidently proceed from a conviction of its truth and a bias to what is right. My object in writing it was to set down such observations as had occurred to me from time to time on different subjects, and as appeared to be any ways worth preserving. I wished to make a sort of *Liber Veritatis*, a set of studies from human life. As my object was not to flatter, neither was it to offend or contradict others, but to state my own feelings or opinions such as they really were, but more particularly of course when this had not been done before, and where I thought I could throw any new light upon a subject. In doing so, I endeavoured to fix my attention only on the thing I was writing about, and which had struck me in some particular manner, which I wished to point out to others, with the best reasons or explanations I could give. I was not the slave of prejudices; nor do I think I was the dupe of my own vanity. To repeat what has been said a thousand times is common-place: to contradict it because it has been so said, is not originality. A truth is, however, not the worse but the better for being new. I did not try to think with the multitude nor to differ with them, but to think for myself; and the having done this with some boldness and some effect is the height of my offending. I wrote to the public with the same sincerity and want of disguise as if I had been making a register of my private thoughts; and this has been construed by some into a breach of decorum. The

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affectation I have been accused of was merely my sometimes stating a thing in an extreme point of view for fear of not being understood; and my love of paradox may, I think, be accounted for from the necessity of counteracting the obstinacy of prejudice. If I have been led to carry a remark too far, it was because others would not allow it to have any force at all. My object was to shew the latent operation of some unsuspected principle, and I therefore took only some one view of that particular subject. I was chiefly anxious that the germ of thought should be true and original; that I should put others in possession of what I meant, and then left it to find its level in the operation of common sense, and to have its excesses corrected by other causes. The principle will be found true, even where the application is extravagant or partial. I have not been wedded to my particular speculations with the spirit of a partisan. I wrote for instance an Essay on Pedantry, to qualify the extreme contempt into which it has fallen, and to shew the necessary advantages of an absorption of the whole mind in some favourite study, and I wrote an Essay on the Ignorance of the Learned to lessen the undue admiration of Learning, and to shew that it is not every thing. I gained very few converts to either of these opinions. You reproach me with the cynical turn of many of my Essays, which are in fact prose-satires; but when you say I hate every thing but washer-women, you forget what you had before said that I was a great imitator of Addison, and wrote much about "poetry and painting, and music and *gusto*." You make no mention of my character of Rousseau, or of the paper on Actors and Acting. You also forget my praise of John Buncle! As to my style, I thought little about it. I only used the word which seemed to me to signify the idea I wanted to convey, and I did not rest till I had got it.

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In seeking for truth, I sometimes found beauty. As to the facility of which you, Sir, and others accuse me, it has not been acquired at once nor without pains. I was eight years in writing eight pages, under circumstances of inconceivable and ridiculous discouragement. As to my figurative and gaudy phraseology, you reproach me with it because you never heard of what I had written in my first dry manner. I afterwards found a popular mode of writing necessary to convey subtle and difficult trains of reasoning, and something more than your meagre vapid style, to force attention to original observations, which did not restrict themselves to making a parade of the discovery of a worm-eaten date, or the repetition of an obsolete prejudice. You say that it is impossible to remember what I write after reading it:—One remembers to have read what you write—*before!* In that you have the advantage of me, to be sure. You in vain endeavour to account for the popularity of some of my writings, from the trick of arranging words in a variety of forms without any correspondent ideas, like the newly-invented optical toy. You have not hit upon the secret, nor will you be able to avail yourself of it when I tell you. It is the old story—*that I think what I please, and say what I think.* This accounts, Sir, for the difference between you and me in so many respects. I think only of the argument I am defending; you are only thinking whether you write grammar. My opinions are founded on reasons which I try to give; yours are governed by motives which you keep to yourself. It has been my business all my life to get at the truth as well as I could, merely to satisfy my own mind: it has been yours to suppress the evidence of your senses and the dictates of your understanding, if you ever found them at variance with your convenience or the caprices of others. I do not suppose you ever in your life took

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an interest in any abstract question for its own sake, or have a conception of the possibility of any one else doing so. If you had, you would hardly insist on my changing characters with you. Yet you make this the condition of my receiving any favour or lenity at your hands. It is no matter, Sir: I will try to do without it.

It appears by your own account, that all the other offences of the Round Table would hardly have roused your resentment, had it not been that I have spoken of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Burke, not in the hackneyed terms of a treasury underling. It was this that filled up the measure of my iniquity, and the storm burst on my devoted head. After quoting one or two half sentences from the character of Mr. Pitt,[1] in which I ascribe the influence of his oratory almost entirely to a felicitous and imposing arrangement of words, and the whole of a short note on Mr. Burke's political apostacy, which I had fancifully ascribed to his jealousy of Rousseau, you add with great sincerity—"We are far from intending to write a single word in answer to this loathsome trash:" (it would have been well if you had made and kept the same resolution in other cases,) "but we confess that these passages chiefly excited us to take the trouble of noticing the work. The author might have described washerwomen for ever; complimented himself unceasingly on his own "chivalrous eloquence;" prosed interminably about Chaucer; written, if possible, in a more affected, silly, confused, ungrammatical style, and believed, as he now believes, that he was surpassing Addison, we should not have meddled with him; but if the creature, in his endeavours to crawl into the light, must

[1] This character, (which has not been relished,) appeared originally in a small pamphlet in 1806, called Free Thoughts on Public Affairs, with a note acknowledging my obligations for the leading ideas to an article of Mr. Coleridge's, in the Morning Post, Feb. 1800.

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take his way over the tombs of illustrious men, disfiguring the records of their greatness with the slime and filth which marks his track, it is right to point him out that he may be flung back to the situation in which nature designed that he should grovel" p. 159. And this, Sir, from you who wrote or procured to be inserted in the Quarterly Review, that nefarious attack on the character of Mr. Fox, which was distinguished and is still remembered among the slime and filth which has marked its track into day, over the characters and feelings of the living and the dead. If I, Sir, had written that "foul and vulgar invective" against an individual whom you did not choose to let "rest in his grave," if I had been "such a thing" as the writer of that article, I might, (as you say,) have described washerwomen for ever, and have fancied myself a better writer than "the courtly Addison," and you, Sir, would have encouraged me in the delusion, for I should have been a court-tool, *your* tool. But you state the thing clearly and unanswerably. I was not a court-tool, your tool, and therefore I was to be made your victim. There is a difference of political opinion between you and me; therefore you undertake not only to condemn that opinion, but to proscribe the writer. Do you do this on your own authority, or on Mr. Croker's, or on whose? As I did not consider it as sacrilege to criticise the style and the opinions of the two great men who have contributed to make this country what it is, a feof held by a junto, of which men like you are the organs, in trust and for the benefit of the common cause of despotism throughout Europe, I, and every other writer like me, professing or maintaining any thing like independence of spirit or consistency of opinion, is "to be flung back into his original obscurity, and stifled in the filth and slime" of the Quarterly Review, or its drain, Blackwood's Edin-

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burgh Magazine. You began the experiment upon the Round Table; you have tried it twice since, and for the last time.

If any doubts could ever have been entertained on the subject of your motives and views, you have taken care to remove them. Thus you conclude your account of the character of Shakespear's plays with saying, that you should not have condescended to notice the senseless and wicked sophistry of the work at all, but that "you conceived it might not be unprofitable to shew how small a portion of talent and literature is necessary to carry on the trade of sedition." I should think it requires as much talent and literature to carry on my trade as yours. This acknowledgment of yours is "remarkable for its truth and *naiveté*." It is a pledge from your own mouth of your impartiality and candour. With this object in view, "you have selected a few specimens of my ethics and criticism," (they are very few, and of course you would select no others,) just sufficient, (with your garbling and additions,) to prove "that my knowledge of Shakespear and the English language is exactly on a par with the purity of my morals, and the depth of my understanding." But did it not occur to you in making this officious declaration, or would it not occur to any one else in reading it, that this undertaking of yours might be no less "profitable" and acceptable, even supposing the portion of talent displayed by the author not to be small but great? Would it not be more necessary in this case to do away the scandal that there was any talent or literature on the side of "sedition?" The greater the shock given to the complacency of servility and corruption, by an opinion getting abroad that there was any knowledge of Shakespear or the English language except on the minister's side of the question, would it not be the more absolutely

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incumbent on you as the head of the literary police, to arrest such an opinion in the outset, to crush it before it gathered strength, and to produce the article in question as your warrant? Why, what a disgrace to literature and to loyalty, if owing to the neglect and supineness of the editor of the Quarterly Review, a work written without an atom of cant or hypocrisy, and of course with a very small portion of talent and literature, should, in the space of three months get into a second edition, and be fast advancing to a third, be noticed in the Edinburgh Review, and be talked of by persons who never looked into the Examiner; and how necessary without loss of time, to counteract the mischievous inference from all this, restore the taste of the public to its legitimate tone, and satisfy the courteous reader, who "was well affected to the constitution in church and state as now established," that in future he must look for a knowledge of Shakespear only in the editor of Ben Jonson, of the English language in the private tutor of Lord Grosvenor, for purity of morals in the translator of Juvenal, and for depth of understanding in the notes to the Baviad and Mæviad! Your employers, Mr. Gifford, do not pay their hirelings for nothing—for condescending to notice weak and wicked sophistry; for pointing out to contempt what excites no admiration; for cautiously selecting a few specimens of bad taste and bad grammar, where nothing else is to be found. They want your invincible pertness, your mercenary malice, your impenetrable dulness, your barefaced impudence, your pragmatical self-sufficiency, your hypocritical zeal, your pious frauds to stand in the gap of their prejudices and pretensions, to fly-blow and taint public opinion, to defeat independent efforts, to apply not the sting of the scorpion but the touch of the torpedo to youthful hopes, to crawl and leave the slimy track of sophistry and lies over

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every work that does not "dedicate its sweet leaves" to some luminary of the Treasury Bench, or is not fostered in the hot-bed of corruption. This is your office; "this is what is looked for at your hands, and this you do not baulk"—to sacrifice what little honesty, and prostitute what little intellect you possess to any dirty job you are commissioned to execute. "They keep you as an ape does an apple, in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to be last swallowed." You are, by appointment, literary toad-eater to greatness, and taster to the court. You have a natural aversion to whatever differs from your own pretensions, and an acquired one for what gives offence to your superiors. Your vanity panders to your interest, and your malice truckles only to your love of power. If your instinctive or premeditated abuse of your enviable trust were found wanting in a single instance; if you were to make a single slip in getting up your select Committee of Inquiry and Green Bag Report of the State of Letters, your occupation would be gone. You would never after obtain a squeeze of the hand from a great man, or a smile from a punk of quality. The great and powerful (whom you call the wise and good) do not like to have the privacy of their self-love startled by the obtrusive and unmanageable claims of literature and philosophy, except through the intervention of persons like you, whom, if they have common penetration, they soon find out to be without any superiority of intellect; or, if they do not, whom they can despise for their meanness of soul. You "have the office opposite to St. Peter." You "keep a corner in the public mind, for foul prejudice and corrupt power to knot and gender in;" you volunteer your services to people of quality to ease scruples of mind and qualms of conscience; you "lay the flattering unction" of venal prose and laurelled verse to their souls. You persuade

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them that there is neither purity of morals, nor depth of understanding, except in themselves and their hangers-on; and would prevent the unhallowed names of liberty and humanity from being ever whispered in ears polite! You, Sir, do you not do all this? I cry you mercy then: I took you for the Editor of the Quarterly Review!

In general, you wisely avoid committing yourself upon any question, farther than to hint a difference of opinion, and to assume an air of self-importance upon it. Thus you say, after quoting some remarks of mine, not very respectful to Henry VIII. "We need not answer this gabble," as if you were offended at its absurdity, not at its truth; and were yourself ready to assert (were it worth while) that Henry VIII. was an estimable character, or that he had not his minions and creatures about him in his life-time, who were proud to hail him as the best of kings. If so, you have the authority of Mr. Burke against you, who indulges himself in a very Jacobinical strain of invective against this bloated pattern of royalty, and brute-image of the Divinity. Do you mean to say, that the circumstances of external pomp and unbridled power, which I have pointed out in "the gabble you will not answer" as determining the character of kings, do not make them what for the most part they are, feared in their life-time and scorned by after-ages? If so, you must think Quevedo a libeller and incendiary, who makes his guide to the infernal regions, on being asked "if there were no more kings," answer emphatically—"Here are all that ever lived!" You say that "the mention of a court or of a king always throws me into a fit of raving." Do you then really admire those plague spots of history, and scourges of human nature, Richard II., Richard III., King John, and Henry VIII.? Do you with Mr. Coleridge, in his late Lectures, contend that not to fall down

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in prostration of soul before the abstract majesty of kings as it is seen in the diminished perspective of centuries, argues an inherent littleness of mind? Or do you extend the moral of your maxim—"Speak not of the imputed weaknesses of the Great"—beyond the living to the dead, thus passing an attainder on history, and proving "truth to be a liar" from the beginning? "Speak out, Grildrig!"

You do well to confine yourself to the hypocrite; for you have too little talent for the sophist. Yet in two instances you have attempted an answer to an opinion I had expressed; and in both you have shewn how little you can understand the commonest question. The first is as follows:—"In his remarks upon Coriolanus, which contain the concentrated venom of his malignity, he has libelled our great poet as a friend of arbitrary power, in order that he may introduce an invective against human nature. 'Shakspeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble.'"

How do you prove that he did not? By shewing with a little delicate insinuation how he would have done just what I say he did.—"Shall we not be dishonouring the gentle Shakspeare by answering such calumny, when every page of his works supplies its refutation?[1]—Who has painted with more cordial feelings the tranquil innocence of humble life?" [True.] "Who has furnished more instructive lessons to the great upon 'the insolence of office'—'the oppressor's wrong'—or the abuses of brief authority"—[which you would hallow through all time]—"or who has more

[1] This extreme tenderness, it is to be observed, is felt by a person who in his Life of Ben Jonson, hopes that God will forgive Shakspeare for having written his plays!

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severely stigmatised those 'who crook the pregnant hinges of the knee where thrift may follow fawning ?'" [Granted, none better.] "It is true he was not actuated by an envious hatred of greatness"—[so that to stigmatise servility and corruption does not always proceed from envy and a love of mischief]—"he was not at all likely, had he lived in our time, to be an orator in Spafields or the editor of a seditious Sunday newspaper"—[To have delivered Mr. Coleridge's *Conciones ad Populum*, or to have written Mr. Southey's Wat Tyler]—"he knew what discord would follow if degree were taken away"—[As it did in France from the taking away the degree between the tyrant and the slave, and those little convenient steps and props of it, the Bastile, Lettres de Cachet, and Louis XV.'s *Palais aux cerfs*]—"And *therefore*, with the wise and good of every age, he pointed out the injuries that must arise to society from a turbulent rabble instigated to mischief by men not much more enlightened, and infinitely more worthless than themselves."

So that it would appear by your own account that Shakspeare had a discreet leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, and, had he lived in our time, would probably have been a writer in the Courier, or a contributor to the Quarterly Review! It is difficult to know which to admire most in this, the weakness or the cunning. I have said that Shakspeare has described both sides of the question, and you ask me very wisely, "Did he confine himself to one?" No, I say that he did not: but I suspect that he had a leaning to one side, and has given it more quarter than it deserved. My words are: "Coriolanus is a storehouse of political commonplaces. The arguments for and against aristocracy and democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse

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of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakspeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin, and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. *What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it.*"

I then proceed to account for this by shewing how it is that "the cause of the people is but little calculated for a subject for poetry; or that the language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power." I affirm, Sir, that poetry, that the imagination, generally speaking, delights in power, in strong excitement, as well as in truth, in good, in right, whereas pure reason and the moral sense approve only of the true and good. I proceed to shew that this general love or tendency to immediate excitement or theatrical effect, no matter how produced, gives a bias to the imagination often inconsistent with the greatest good, that in poetry it triumphs over principle, and bribes the passions to make a sacrifice of common humanity. You say that it does not, that there is no such original sin in poetry, that it makes no such sacrifice or unworthy compromise between poetical effect and the still small voice of reason. And how do you prove that there is no such principle giving a bias to the imagination, and a false colouring to poetry? Why by asking in reply to the instances where this principle operates, and where no other can, with much modesty and simplicity—"But are these the only topics that afford delight in poetry, &c." No; but these objects do afford delight in poetry, and they afford it in proportion to their strong and often tragical effect, and not in proportion to the good produced, or their desirableness in a moral point of view? "Do we read

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with more pleasure of the ravages of a beast of prey, than of the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain?" No; but we do read with pleasure of the ravages of a beast of prey, and we do so on the principle I have stated, namely, from the sense of power abstracted from the sense of good; and it is the same principle that makes us read with admiration and reconciles us in fact to the triumphant progress of the conquerors and mighty hunters of mankind, who come to stop the shepherd's pipe upon the mountains, and sweep away his listening flock. Do you mean to deny that there is any thing imposing to the imagination in power, in grandeur, in outward shew, in the accumulation of individual wealth and luxury, at the expense of equal justice and the common weal? Do you deny that there is any thing in "the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war, that makes ambition virtue," in the eyes of admiring multitudes? Is this a new theory of the Pleasures of the Imagination, which says that the pleasures of the imagination do not take rise solely in the calculations of the understanding? Is it a paradox of my making, that "one murder makes a villain, millions a hero!" Or is it not true that here, as in other cases, the enormity of the evil overpowers and makes a convert of the imagination by its very magnitude? You contradict my reasoning, because you know nothing of the question, and you think that no one has a right to understand what you do not. My offence against purity in the passage alluded to, "which contains the concentrated venom of my malignity," is, that I have admitted that there are tyrants and slaves abroad in the world; and you would hush the matter up, and pretend that there is no such thing, in order that there may be nothing else. Farther, I have explained the cause, the subtle sophistry of the human mind, that tolerates and pampers the evil, in order to

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guard against its approaches; you would conceal the cause in order to prevent the cure, and to leave the proud flesh about the heart to harden and ossify into one impenetrable mass of selfishness and hypocrisy, that we may not "sympathise in the distresses of suffering virtue" in any case, in which they come in competition with the factitious wants and "imputed weaknesses of the great." You ask "are we gratified by the cruelties of Domitian or Nero?" No, not we—they were too petty and cowardly to strike the imagination at a distance; but the Roman Senate tolerated them, addressed their perpetrators, exalted them into Gods, the Fathers of their people; they had pimps and scribblers of all sorts in their pay, their Senecas, &c. till a turbulent rabble thinking that there were no injuries to society greater than the endurance of unlimited and wanton oppression, put an end to the farce, and abated the nuisance as well as they could. Had you and I lived in those times, we should have been what we are now, I "a sour mal-content," and you "a sweet courtier." Your reasoning is ill put together; it wants sincerity, it wants ingenuity. To prove that I am wrong in saying that the love of power and heartless submission to it extend beyond the tragic stage to real life, to prove that there has been nothing heard but the shepherd's pipe upon the mountain, and that the still sad music of humanity has never filled up the pauses to the thoughtful ear, you bring in illustration the cruelties of Domitian and Nero, whom you suppose to have been without flatterers, train-bearers, or executioners, and "the crimes of revolutionary France of a still blacker die," (a sentence which alone would have entitled you to a post of honour and secrecy under Sejanus,) which you suppose to have been without aiders or abettors. You speak of the horrors of Robespierre's reign; (there you tread on velvet;) do you mean

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that these atrocities excited nothing but horror in revolutionary France, in undelivered France, in Paris, the centre and focus of anarchy and crime; or that the enthusiasm and madness with which they were acted and applauded, was owing to nothing but a long-deferred desire for truth and justice, and the collected vengeance of the human race? You do not mean this, for you never mean any thing that has even an approximation to unfashionable truth in it. You add, "We cannot recollect, however, that these crimes were heard of with much satisfaction in this country." Then you have forgotten the years 1793 and 94, you have forgotten the addresses against republicans and levellers, you have forgotten Mr. Burke, and his 80,000 incorrigible Jabobins."—"Nor had we the misfortune to know any individual, (though we will not take upon us to deny that Mr. Hazlitt may have been of that description," (I will take upon me to deny that) "who cried havoc, and enjoyed the atrocities of Robespierre and Carnot." Then at that time, Sir, you had not the good fortune to know Mr. Southey.[1]

To return, you find fault with my toleration of those pleasant persons, Lucio, Pompey, and Master Froth, in Measure for Measure, and with my use of the word "natural morality." And yet, "the word is a good word, being whereby a man may be accommodated." If Pompey was a common bawd, you, Sir, are a court pimp. That is artificial morality. "Go to, a feather turns the scale of your avoir-du-pois." I have also, it seems, erred in using the term *moral* in a way not familiar to

[1] It was a phrase, (I have understood,) common in this gentleman's mouth, that Robespierre, by destroying the lives of thousands, saved the lives of millions. Or, as Mr. Wordsworth has lately expressed the same thought with a different application, "Carnage is the daughter of humanity."

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you, as opposed to *physical;* and in that sense have applied it to the description of the mole on Imogen's neck, "cinque-spotted, like the crimson drops i'th' bottom of a cowslip." I have stated that there is more than a physical—there is a moral beauty in this image, and I think so still, though you may not comprehend how.

You assert roundly that there is no such person as the black prince Morocchius,[1] in the Merchant of Venice. "He, (Mr. Hazlitt,) objects entirely to a personage of whom we never heard before, the black Prince Marocchius. With this piece of blundering ignorance, *which, with* a thousand similar instances of his intimate acquaintance with the poet, clearly *prove* that his enthusiasm for Shakespear is all affected, we conclude what we have to say of his folly; it remains to say a few words of his mischief." No. xxxiv. p. 463. I could not at first, Sir, comprehend your drift in this passage, and I can scarcely believe it yet. But I perceive that in Chalmers's edition, the tawny suitor of Portia, who is called Morocchius in my common edition, goes by the style and title of Morocco. This important discovery proves, according to you, that my admiration of Shakespear is all affected, and that I can know nothing of the poet or his characters. So that the only title to admiration in Shakespear, not only in the Merchant of Venice, but in his other plays, all knowledge of his beauties, or proof of an intimate acquaintance with his genius, is confined to the alteration which Mr. Chalmers has adopted in the termination of the two last syllables of the name of this blackamoor, and his reading Morocco for Morocchius. Admirable grammarian, excellent critic! I do not wonder you think nothing of my Characters of Shakespear's plays, when I see what it is that you really

[1] You have spelt it wrong (Marocchius), on purpose for what I know.

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admire and think worth the study in them. No, no, Mr. Gifford, you shall not persuade me by your broken English and "red-lattice phrases," that the only thing in Shakespear worth knowing, was the baptismal name of this Prince of Morocco, or that no one can admire the author's plays out of Mr. Chalmers's edition, or find any thing to admire even there, except the new nomenclature of the *dramatis personæ*. If this is not your meaning in the passage here quoted, I do not know what it is; if it is not, I have done you great injustice in supposing that it is, for I am sure it cannot mean any thing else so foolish and contemptible. You had begun this curious paragraph by saying, that "I had run through my set of phrases, and was completely at a stand;" and you bring as a damning proof of this, a repetition of two phrases. Do you believe that I had filled 300 pages with the repetition of two phrases? "Go, go, you're a censorious ill man."

The deliberate hypocrisy of Regan and Gonerill, of which I spoke, I had explained in the sentence before by a periphrasis to mean their "hypocritical pretensions to virtue." If I had no right to use the word hastily in this absolute sense, you had still less to confound the meaning of a whole passage. Edmund is indeed "a hypocrite to his father; he is a hypocrite to his brother, and to Regan and Gonerill;" but he is not a hypocrite to himself. This is that consummation of hypocrisy of which I spoke, and of which you ought to know something.

I have commenced my observations on Lear, you say, with "an acknowledgment remarkable for its naiveté and its truth;" the import of which remarkable acknowledgment is, that I find myself incompetent to do justice to this tragedy, by any criticism upon it. This you construe into a "determination on my part to write

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nonsense;" you seem, Sir, to have sat down with a determination to write something worse than nonsense. As a proof of my having fulfilled the promise, (which I had *not* made,) you cite these words, "It is then the best of all Shakespear's plays, for it is the one in which he was *most in earnest;*" and add significantly, "Macbeth and Othello were mere *jeux d'esprit*, we presume." You may presume so, but not from what I have said. You only aim at being a word-catcher, and fail even in that. In like manner, you say, "If this means that we sympathise so much with the feelings and sentiments of Hamlet, that we identify ourselves with the character, we have to accuse Mr. Hazlitt of strangely misleading us a few pages back." "The moral of Othello comes directly home to the business and bosoms of men; the interest in Hamlet is more *remote* and reflex." "And yet it is we who are Hamlet."—Yes, because we sympathise with Hamlet, in the way I have explained, and which you ought to have endeavoured at least to understand. as reflecting and moralising on the general distresses of human life, and not as particularly affected by those which come home to himself, as we see in Othello. You accuse me of stringing words together without meaning, and it is you who cannot connect two ideas together.

You call me "a poor cankered creature," "a trader in sedition," "a wicked sophist," and yet you would have it believed that I am "principally distinguished by an *indestructible* love of flowers and odours, and dews and clear waters, and soft airs and sounds and bright skies, and woodland solitudes and moonlight bowers."[1] I do not understand how you reconcile such "welcome and unwelcome things," but any thing will do to feed

[1] Quoted from the Edinburgh Review, No. 56.

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your spleen at another's expence, when it is the person and not the thing you dislike. Thus you complain of my style, that it is at times figurative, at times poetical, at times familiar, not always the same flat dull thing that you would have it. You point out the omission of a line in a quotation from a well-known passage in Shakespear. You do not however think the detection of this omission a sufficient proof of your sagacity, but you proceed to assign as a motive for it, "That I do it to improve the metre," which is ridiculous. You say I conjure up objections to Shakespear which nobody ever thought of, in order to answer them. The objection to Romeo and Juliet, which I have answered, was made by the late Mr. Curran, as well as the objection to the want of interest and action in Paradise Lost, which I have answered in another place.—"Thus he endeavours to convince one class of critics, that the poet's genius was not confined to the production of stage effect by supernatural means. In another place he expresses his astonishment that Shakespear should be considered as a gloomy writer, who painted nothing but gorgons, hydras, and chimeras dire." One of these classes of critics which, you say, "are phantoms of my own creating," comprehends the whole French nation, and the other the greatest part of the English with Dr. Johnson at their head, who in his Preface, "one of the most perfect pieces of criticism since the days of Quintilian" (and which might have been written in the days of Quintilian just as well as in ours) has neglected to expatiate on Shakespear's "*indestructible* love of flowers and odours, and woodland solitudes and moonlight bowers." You know nothing of Shakespear, nor of what is thought about him: you mind only the text of the commentators. With respect to Mr. Wordsworth's Ode, which I have dragged into my account of Romeo and Juliet, I did not quarrel with

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the poetical conceit, but with the metaphysical doctrine founded upon it by his school. There is a difference between "ends of verse and sayings of philosophers." If Shakespear had been a great German transcendental philosopher (either at the first or second hand) his talking of the music of the spheres might have rendered him suspected. You compare my account of Hamlet to the dashing style of a showman: I think the showman's speech is proper to a show, and mine to Hamlet. You, Sir, have no sympathy in common with Hamlet; nothing to make him seem ever "present to your mind's eye;" no feeling to produce such an hallucination in your mind, nor to make you tolerate it in others. You are an Ultra-Crepidarian critic.

You laugh at my theory, that "Filch's picking of pockets has ceased to be so good a jest as formerly," from the degeneracy of the age, that is, from the diminution of the practice, as at variance with the Police Report. Shortly after I had hazarded this piece of conjectural criticism, the Beggar's Opera was hooted off the stage in America—because they have no Police Report there. I may have been premature in applying this conclusion from a highly advanced state of civilization, or from the degeneracy of the age we live in, to our own country.

What you say of my remarks on the use which Shakespear makes of the principal analogy in Cymbeline, and of contrast in Macbeth is beneath an answer. You should confine yourself to mere matters of verbal criticism. Thus you object to my use of the term "logical diagrams" as unprecedented and barbarous: yet we talk of syllogising in mode and figure, and besides, the word has been made pretty malleable by Mr. Burke. What do you say to his talking of "the geometricians and chemists of France, bringing the one from the dry bones of their diagrams,

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and the other from the soot of their furnaces, dispositions worse than indifferent to common feelings and habitudes;" would you call this "slip-slop absurdity?" But to talk of *the dry bones of diagrams* and escape with impunity from the censure of small critics, a man must assert that the king of this country "holds his crown in contempt of the choice of the people."

I am obliged to you for informing me of the real name of the person who wrote the ingenious parallel between Richard the Third and Macbeth.

The article in the last Review on my Lectures on English Poetry, requires a very short notice.—You would gladly retract what you have said, but you dare not. You are a coward to public opinion and to your own. You begin by observing, "Mr. Hazlitt seems to have bound himself like Hannibal to wage everlasting war, not indeed against Rome, but against accurate reasoning, just observation, and precise, or even intelligible language." This might be true, if the opinion of the Quarterly Review were synonymous with accurate reasoning, just observation, and knowledge of language. "We have traced him in his two former predatory excursions on taste and common sense. Had he written on any other subject, we should scarcely have thought of watching his movements." You were "principally excited to notice" the Round Table by some political heresies which had crept into it: you "condescended to notice" the Characters of Shakespear's Plays, "to shew how small a portion of talent and literature was necessary to carry on the trade of sedition." You have been tempted to watch my movements in the present work to shew how little talent and literature is necessary to write a popular work on poetry. "But though his book is dull, his theme is pleasing, and interests in spite of the author. As we read, we forget Mr. Hazlitt,

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to think of those concerning whom he writes." Do you think, Sir, that a higher compliment could come from you?

It would neither be for my credit nor your own that I should follow you in detail through your abortive attempts to deny me exactly those qualifications which you feel conscious that I possess, or afraid that others will ascribe to me. You are already bankrupt of your word, nor can I be admitted as an evidence in my own case. You say that I am utterly without originality, without a power of illustration, or language to make myself understood!—I shall leave it to the public to judge between us. There is one objection however which you make to me which is singular enough: viz. that I quote Shakespear. I can only answer, that "I would not change that vice for your best virtue." "If a trifling thing is to be told, he will not mention it in common language: he must give it, if possible, in words which the Bard of Avon has *somewhere* used. Were *the beauty of the applications conspicuous*, we might forget or at least forgive, *the deformity* produced *by the constant stitching in of these patches*"—[*i.e.* by the beauty of the applications.] "Unfortunately, however, the phrases thus obtruded upon us *seem* to be selected, not on account of *any intrinsic beauty*, but merely because they are *fantastic and unlike what would naturally occur to an ordinary writer.*" Certainly, Sir, your style is very different from Shakespear's. I observe in your notes to the Baviad and Mæviad, you diversify your matter by frequently quoting Greek.—Now it appears to me that these quotations of your's add to the wit only by varying the type. If these learned patches "plagued the Cruscas and Lauras," my quotations have given other people "the horrors!"

You quote my definition of poetry, and say that it is not a definition of any thing, because it is completely

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unintelligible. To prove this, you take one word which occurs in it, and is no way important, the word *sympathy*, which you tell us has two significations, one anatomical, and the other moral; and poetry, according to you, "has no skill in surgery or ethics." I do not think this shews a want of clearness in my definition, but a want of good faith or understanding in you.

You say that I get at a number of extravagant conclusions "by means sufficiently simple and common. He employs the term poetry in three distinct meanings, and his legerdemain consists in substituting one of these for the other. Sometimes it is the general appellation of a certain class of compositions, as when he says that poetry is graver than history. Secondly, it denotes the talent by which these compositions are produced; and it is in this sense that he calls poetry that fine particle within us, which produces in our being rarefaction, expansion, elevation and purification." [This is Mr. Gifford's academic style, not mine.] "Thirdly, it denotes the subjects of which these compositions treat. It is in this meaning that he uses the term, when he says that all that is worth remembering in life is the poetry of it; that fear is poetry, that hope is poetry, that love is poetry; and in the very same sense he might assert that fear is sculpture and painting and music; that the crimes of Verres are the eloquence of Cicero, and the poetry of Milton the criticism of Mr. Hazlitt." It is true I have used the word poetry in the three senses above imputed to me, and I have done so, because the word has these three *distinct* meanings in the English language, that is, it signifies the composition produced, the state of mind or faculty producing it, and, in certain cases, the subject-matter proper to call forth that state of mind. Your objection amounts to this, that in reasoning on a difficult question I write common English, and

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this is the whole secret of my extravagance and obscurity.—Do you mean that the distinguishing between the compositions of poetry, the talent for poetry, or the subject-matter of poetry, would have told us what *poetry* is? This is what you would say, or you have no meaning at all. I have expressly treated the subject according to this very division, and I have endeavoured to define that common something which belongs to these several views of it, and determines us in the application of the same common name, *viz.* an unusual vividness in external objects or in our immediate impressions, exciting a movement of imagination in the mind, and leading by natural association or *sympathy* in harmony of sound and the modulation of verse in expressing it. This is what you, Sir, cannot understand. I could not "assert in the same sense that fear is sculpture and painting, &c." because this would be an abuse of the English language: we talk of the *poetry of painting*, &c. which could not be, if poetry was confined to the technical sense of "lines in ten syllables." The crimes of Verres, I also grant, were not the same thing as the eloquence of Cicero, though I suspect you confound the crimes of revolutionary France with Mr. Pitt's speeches; and as to Milton's poetry and my criticisms, there is almost as much difference between them as between Milton's poetry and your verses. You say, "the principal subjects of which poetry treats, are the passions and affections of mankind; we are all under the influence of our passions and affections, that is, in Mr. Hazlitt's new language, we all act on the principles of poetry, and are in truth all poets. We all exert our muscles and limbs, therefore we are anatomists and surgeons; we have teeth which we employ in chewing, therefore we are dentists," &c. Not at all; we are all poets, inasmuch as we are under the influence of the

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passions and imagination, that is, as we have certain common feelings, and undergo the same process of mind with the poet, who only expresses in a particular manner what he and all feel alike; but in exerting our muscles, we do not dissect them; in chewing with our teeth, we do perform the part of dentists, &c. There is nothing parallel in the two cases. "You anticipate," you say, "these brilliant conclusions for me;" and do not perceive the difference between the extension of a logical principle, and an abuse of common language.—You proceed, "As another specimen of his definitions, we may take the following. 'Poetry does not define the limits of sense, nor analyse the distinctions of the understanding, but signifies the excess of the imagination beyond the actual or ordinary impression of any object or feeling.' Poetry was at the beginning of the book asserted to be *an impression*; it is now *the excess of the imagination beyond an impression*; what this excess is we cannot tell, but at least it must be something very unlike an impression." Poetry at the beginning of the book was asserted to be not simply an impression, "but an impression *by its vividness exciting an involuntary movement of the imagination*: now, you say it is *the excess of the imagination beyond an impression*; and you bring this as a proof of a contradiction in terms. An impression by its vividness exciting a movement of the imagination, you discover, must be something very unlike an impression, and as to the imagination itself, you cannot tell what it is; it is an unknown power in your poetical creed. What is most extraordinary is, that you had quoted the very passage which you here represent as a total contradiction to the latter, only two pages before. What, Sir, do you think of your readers? What must they think of you!—"Though the *total want of meaning*," you add, "is the weightiest objection to such

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writing, yet *the abuse* which it involves of *particular words and phrases*" (in addition to a total want of meaning) "is very remarkable," (it must be so,) "and will not be overlooked by those who are aware of the inseparable connexion between justness of thought and precision of language." (You are not aware that there is no precise measure of thought or expression.) "What, in strict reasoning, can be meant by the impression of a feeling?" (The impression which it makes on the mind, as distinct from some other to which it gives birth, is what I meant.) "How can *actual* and *ordinary* be used as synonymous?" (They are not.) "Every impression must be an actual impression;" (there is then no such thing as an imaginary impression;) "and the use of that epithet annihilates the limitations which Mr. Hazlitt meant" (in the total want of all meaning,) "to guard his proposition." *We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us.* You say, "you have not the faintest conception of what I mean by the heavenly bodies returning on the squares of the distances or on Dr. Chalmers's Discourses." Nor will I tell you what I meant. *A knavish speech sleeps in a fool's ear.* "As to the assertion that there can never be another Jacob's dream, we see no reason why dreams should be scientific." Shakespear says, that dreams "*denote a foregone conclusion.*" You quote what I say of Swift, and misrepresent it. "Mr. Hazlitt's doctrine, therefore, is, that the inability to become mad, is very likely to drive a man mad." My doctrine is, that the inability to get rid of a favourite idea, when constantly thwarted, or of the impression of any object, however painful, merely because it is true, is likely to drive a man mad. It is this tenaciousness on a particular point that almost always destroys the general coherence of the understanding. I do not say that the inability to get rid of the distinction between

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right and wrong continued in Swift's mind after he was mad—I say it contributed to drive him mad. I mean that a sense of great injustice often produces madness in individual cases, and that a strong sense of general injustice, and an abstracted view of human nature such as it is, compared with what it ought to be, is likely to produce the same effect in a mind like that of the author of Gulliver's Travels. Do you understand yet? You do not go into my general character of Swift, which might have drawn you into something of a wider field of speculation; and you pick out a straggling sentence or two to cavil at in my account of Pope, of Chaucer, of Milton, and Shakespear, on which you are glad to discharge the gall that has been accumulating in your mind for several pages. If you think by this means, to put me or the public out of conceit with my writings, you have mistaken the matter entirely. You can only put down my arguments by meeting them fairly, or my style, by writing better than you do.

"We occasionally," you proceed, "discover a faint semblance of connected thinking in Mr. Hazlitt's pages; but wherever this is the case, his reasoning is for the most part incorrect." This is a curious inference. "This faint semblance of connected thinking," is, it appears, when I maintain some opinion, which is "a sprout from some popular doctrine;" but if I push it a little farther than you were aware of, my reasoning becomes incorrect. Thus it has been a popular doctrine with some critics, (which yet you do not admit)—"That the progress of science is unfavourable to the culture of the imaginatiou. It is no doubt true, that the individual who devotes his labour to the investigation of abstract truth, must acquire habits of thought very different from those which the exercise of the fancy demands." You add in italics, "*the cause lies in the exclusive appro-*

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priation of his time to reasoning, and not in the logical accuracy with which he reasons." Whenever I have any discovery to communicate, which I think you cannot comprehend, I will in future put it in italics, to make it equally profound and clear. It appears by you, that the incompatibility between the successful pursuit of different studies does not arise from any thing incompatible in the studies themselves, but from the time devoted to each. The mind is equally incapacitated from passing from one to the other, whether they are the most opposite or the most alike. The dreams of alchemy, and the schemes of astrology, the traditional belief in the doctrine of ghosts and fairies, though made up almost entirely of imagination, self-will, superstition and romance, were not a jot more favourable to the caprices and fanciful exaggerations of poetry, either in the public mind, or in that of individuals, than the modern system which excludes (both by the logical accuracy with which it proceeds, and a constant appeal to demonstrable facts), every alloy of passion, and all exercise of the imagination. You should never put your thoughts in italics. If I were to attempt a character of verbal critics, I should be apt to say, that their habits of mind disqualify them for general reasoning or fair discussion: that they are furious about trifles, because they have nothing else to interest them; that they have no way of giving dignity to their insignificant discoveries, but by treating those who have missed them with contempt; that they are dogmatical and conceited, in proportion as they have little else to guide them in their quaint researches but caprice and accident; that the want of intellectual excitement gives birth to increasing personal irritability, and endless petty altercation. You, Sir, would make all this self-evident, by the help of italics, and say, that *the cause lies not in any thing in the*

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nature of verbal criticism, but the exclusive appropriation of their time to it.

You next run foul of my account of the pleasure derived from tragedy. You are afraid to understand what I say on any subject, and it is not therefore likely you should ever detect what is erroneous in it. I have shewn by a reference to facts, and to the authority of Mr. Burke (whom you would rather contradict than believe me) that the objects which are supposed to please only in fiction, please in reality; that "if there were to be a public execution of some state criminal in the next street, the theatre would soon be empty"—that therefore the pleasure derived from tragedy is not any thing peculiar to it, as poetry or fiction; but has its ground in the common love of strong excitement. You say I have mistated the fact, to give a false view of the question, which, according to you, is "why that which is painful in itself, pleases in works of fiction." I answer, I have shewn that this is not a fair statement of the question, by stating the fact, that what is painful in itself, pleases not the sufferer indeed, but the spectator, in reality as well as in works of fiction. The common proverb proves it—"What is sport to one, is death to another."

You observe, that "Some lines I have quoted from Chaucer, are very pleasing—

> ———"Emelie that fayrer was to sene
> Than is the lilie upon his stalke grene,
> And fresher than the May with floures newe:
> For with the rose-colour strove hire hewe:
> I n'ot which was the finer of hem too."

"But surely the beauty does not lie in the last line, though it is with this that Mr. Hazlitt is chiefly struck. 'This scrupulousness' he observes, 'about the literal

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preference, as if some question of matter of fact were at issue, is remarkable.'"

That is, I am not chiefly struck with the beauty of the last line, but with its peculiarity as characteristic of Chaucer. The beauty of the former lines might be in Spenser: the scrupulous exactness of the latter could be found no where but in Chaucer. I had said just before, that this poet "introduces a sentiment or a simile, as if it were given in upon evidence." I bring this simile as an instance in point, and you say I have not brought it to prove something else.

You charge me with misrepreseuting Longinus, and prove that I have not. The word εναγωνιον signifies not as you are pleased to paraphrase it "vehemently energetic," but simply "full of contests." Must the Greek language be new-fangled, to prove that I am ignorant of it?

The only mistake you are able to point out, is a slip of the pen, which you will find to have been corrected long ago in the second edition.—Your pretending to say that Dr. Johnson was an admirer of Milton's blank verse, is not a slip of the pen—you know he was not. There is as little sincerity in your concluding paragraph. You would ascribe what little appearance of thought there is in my writings to a confusion of images, and what appearance there is of imagination to a gaudy phraseology. If I had neither words nor ideas, I should be a profound philosopher and critic. How fond you are of reducing every one else to your own standard of excellence!

I have done what I promised. You complain of the difficulty of remembering what I write; possibly this Letter will prove an exception. There is a train of thought in your own mind, which will connect the links together: and before you again undertake to run down a writer for no other reason, than that he is of an oppo-

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site party to yourself, you will perhaps recollect that your wilful artifices and shallow cunning, though they pass undetected, will hardly screen you from your own contempt, nor, when once exposed, will the gratitude of your employers save you from public scorn.

Your conduct to me is no new thing: it is part of a system which has been regularly followed up for many years. Mr. Coleridge, in his Literary Life, has the following passage to shew the treatment which he and his friends received from your predecessor, the editor of the Anti-Jacobin Review.—"I subjoin part of a note from the Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin, in which having previously informed the public that I had been dishonoured at Cambridge for preaching Deism, at a time when for my youthful ardour in defence of Christianity I was decried as a bigot by the proselytes of French philosophy, the writer concludes with these words—'*Since this time he has left his native country, commenced citizen of the world, left his poor children fatherless, and his wife destitute.* Ex hoc disce *his friends, Lamb and Southey.*' With severest truth," continues Mr. Coleridge, "it may be asserted that it would not be easy to select two men more exemplary in their domestic affections than those whose names were thus printed at full length, as in the same rank of morals with a denounced infidel and fugitive, who had left his children fatherless, and his wife destitute! *Is it surprising that many good men remained longer than perhaps they otherwise would have done, adverse to a party which encouraged and openly rewarded the authors of such atrocious calumnies?*"

With me, I confess, the wonder does not lie there:—all I am surprised at is, that the objects of these atrocious calumnies were ever reconciled to the authors of them and their patrons. Doubtless, they had powerful arts of conversion in their hands, who could with im-

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punity and in triumph take away by atrocious calumnies the characters of all who disdained to be their tools; and rewarded with honours, places, and pensions all those who were. It is in this manner, Sir, that some of my old friends have become your new allies and associates.—They have changed sides, not I; and the proof that I have been true to the original ground of quarrel is, that I have you against me. Your consistency is the undeniable pledge of their tergiversation. The instinct of self-interest and meanness of servility are infalible and safe; it is speculative enthusiasm and disinterested love of public good, that being the highest strain of humanity, are apt to falter, and "dying, make a swan-like end." This tendency to change was, in the case of our poetical reformists, precipitated by another cause. The spirit of poetry is, as I have shewn elsewhere, favourable to liberty and humanity, but not when its aid is most wanted, in encountering the shocks and disappointments of the world. Poetry may be described as having the range of the universe; it traverses the empyrean, and looks down on nature from a higher sphere. When it lights upon the earth, it loses some of its dignity and its use. Its strength is in its wings; its element is the air. Standing on its feet, jostling with the crowd, it is liable to be overthrown, trampled on, and defaced; for its wings are of a dazzling brightness, "sky-tinctured," and the least soil upon them shews to disadvantage. Sullied, degraded as I have seen it, I shall not here insult over it, but leave it to Time to take out the stains, seeing it is a thing immortal as itself. "Being so majestical, I should do it wrong to offer it but the shew of violence." —The reason why I have not changed my principles with some of the persons here alluded to, is, that I had a natural inveteracy of understanding which did not bend to fortune or circumstances. I was not a poet,

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but a metaphysician; and I suspect that the conviction of an abstract principle is alone a match for the prejudices of absolute power, The love of truth is the best foundation for the love of liberty. In this sense, I might have repeated—

> "Love is not love that alteration finds:
> Oh! no, it is an everfixed mark,
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken."

Besides, I had another reason. I owed something to truth, for she had done something for me. Early in life I had made (what I thought) a metaphysical discovery; and after that, it was too late to think of retracting. My pride forbad it: my understanding revolted at it. I could not do better than go on as I had begun. I too, worshipped at no unhallowed shrine, and served in no mean presence. I had laid my hand on the ark, and could not turn back! I have been called "a writer of third-rate books." For myself, there is no work of mine which I should rate so high, except one, which I dare say you never heard of—An Essay on the Principles of Human Action. I do not think the worse of it on that account; nor though you might not be able to understand it, could you attribute this to the gaudiness of the phraseology, nor the want of thought. I will here, Sir, explain the nature of the argument as clearly and in as few words as I can.

The object of that Essay (and I have written this Letter partly to introduce it through you to the notice of the reader) is to leave free play to the social affections, and to the cultivation of the more disinterested and generous principles of our nature, by removing a stumbling-block which has been thrown in their way, and which turns the very idea of virtue or humanity into a fable, *viz.* the metaphysical doctrine of the innate

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and necessary selfishness of the human mind. Do you understand so far? The question I propose to examine is not the practical question, how far man is more or less selfish or social in the actual sum-total of his habits and affections, nor the moral or political question, to what degree of perfection he can be advanced still further in the one, or weaned from the other; but my intention is to state and answer the previous question, whether there is, as it has been contended, a total incapacity and physical impossibility in the human mind, of feeling an interest in any thing beyond itself, so that both the common feelings of compassion, natural affection, friendship, &c. and the more refined and abstracted ones of the love of justice, of country, or of kind, are, and must be a delusion, believed in only by fools, and turned to their advantage by knaves. This doctrine which has been sedulously and confidently maintained by the French and English metaphysicians of the two last centuries, by Hobbes, Mandeville, Rochefoucault, Helvetius and others, and is a principal cornerstone of what is called the modern philosophy, I think tends to, and has done a great deal of mischief, and I believe I have found out a view of the subject, which gets rid of it unanswerably and for ever, in manner and form following. I conceive, that to establish the doctrine of exclusive and absolute selfishness on a metaphysical basis, that is to say, on the original and impassable distinction of the faculties of the human mind, it is necessary to make it appear, that there is some peculiar and abstracted principle which gives it an immediate, mechanical, and irresistible interest in whatever relates to itself, and which by the same rule shuts out and is a bar to the very possibility of our feeling not an equal, but any kind or degree of interest whatever, at any moment of our lives, in the history and fate of

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others.—This is so far from being true, that the contrary is demonstrable. Thus, Sir, My self-interest in any thing signifies (by the statement) the particular manner in which whatever relates to myself affects me, so as to create an anxiety about it, and be a motive to action. Now the same word, *self*, is indifferently applied to the whole of my being, past, present, and to come; and it is supposed from the use of language and the habitual association of ideas, that this self is *one thing* as well as one word, and my interest in it all along the same necessary, identical interest. That a man must love himself as such, seems a self-evident and simple proposition. The idea appears like an absolute truth, and resists every attempt at analysis, like an element in nature. Some persons, who formerly took the pains to read this work, imagined (do not be alarmed, Sir!) that I wanted to argue them out of their own existence, merely because I endeavoured to define the nature and meaning of this word, self; to take in pieces, by metaphysical aid, this fine illusion of the brain and forgery of language, and to shew what there is real, and what false in it. The word denotes, by common consent, three different selves, my past, my present, and my future self. Now it is taken for granted by some, and insisted upon by others, that I must have the same unavoidable interest in all these, because they are all equally myself. But that is impossible; for in truth my personal identity is founded only on my personal consciousness, and that does not extend beyond the present moment. —It must be maintained, on the other side of the question, that my past, my present, and my future self are inseparably linked together, equally identified by an intimate communion of transferable thoughts and feelings in one metaphysical principle of self-interest, before they can be equally myself, the same identical thing, to

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any purpose of sentiment or for any motive of action. It will easily be seen how far this is the case, and how far it is not. I have a peculiar, exclusive self-interest or sympathy (never mind the word, Sir,) with my present self, by means of sensation (or consciousness,) and with my past self, by means of memory, which I have not, and cannot have with the past or present feelings or interests of others; for this reason that these faculties are exclusive, peculiar, and confined to myself. But I have no exclusive, or peculiar, or independent faculty, like sensation or memory, giving me the same absolute, unavoidable, instinctive interest in my own future sensations, and none at all in those of others. This ideal self is then nominally the same, but strictly different; composed of distinct and unequal parts; bound together by laws and principles which have no parity of relation to each other. By shewing how personal identity produces self interest as far as it goes, we shall see exactly when and how it ceases.—If I touch a burning coal, this gives me a present sensation differing in kind and degree from any impression I can receive from the same sensation being inflicted on another: there is no communication between another's nerves and my brain producing a correspondent jar and magnetic sympathy of frame. Again, if I have suffered a pain of this sort in time past, this leaves traces in my mind, by my continued identity with myself, or by means of memory, of a kind totally distinct from any conception I can form of the same pain inflicted a year ago (for instance) on another. These two important faculties then give me an appropriate and exclusive interest only in what happens or has happened to myself. So far as the operation of these two faculties goes, I am strictly a selfish being, I am necessarily cut off from all knowledge of or sympathy with the feelings of any one but myself.

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But if I am to undergo a certain pain at a future time, the next year or the next moment, however near or remote, I have no faculty impressing this feeling intuitively and with mechanical force and certainty on my mind beforehand, as my present or past impressions are stamped upon it by means of sensation and memory. I have no principle of thought or sentiment in the original conformation of my mind, projecting me forward into my future being, giving me a present unavoidable consciousness of it, and removed from all cognisance of what happens to others; I have no faculty identifying my future interests inseparably with my present feelings, and therefore I have no exclusive, mechanical and proper self-interest in them, merely because they are mine: for that which is *mine*, is that which touches me by secret springs, and in a way in which what relates to others can take no hold of me. The only faculty by which I can anticipate what is to befal myself in future, is the same common and disposeable faculty in kind and in mode of operation, by which I can, I do, and must anticipate in degree, and more or less according to circumstances, the feelings and thoughts of others, and take a proportionable interest in them, *viz.* the imagination. To suppose that there is a principle of self-interest in the mind, without a faculty of self-interest, is an absurdity and a contradiction. This idea of an abstract, exclusive, metaphysical self-interest in my own being generally, is taken (by a gross and blind prejudice) from the manner in which the faculties of sensation and memory affect me, and applied to a part of my being, where I have no such interest in myself, because I have no such faculty giving it me. What proves that there is no mechanical sympathy identifying my future with my present being, is, that I am for the most part, indifferent to, ignorant of what is to happen to myself hereafter.

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There is no presentiment in the case. If the house is about to fall on my head, this occasions no uneasiness to my self-love, unless there are circumstances to alarm my imagination beforehand. To suppose, that besides the ideal or rational interest I have in the event, I have another *real* metaphysical interest in it, without object or consciousness, is as if I should say, that I have a particular interest in the past, without remembering it, or in the present without feeling it.—But the future is the only subject of action, that is, of a practical or rational interest at all, either of self-love or benevolence. All voluntary action, that is, all action undertaken with a view to produce a certain event or the contrary, must relate to the future. The primary, essential motive of the volition of any thing must be the *idea* of that thing, and the idea solely. For the thing itself, which is the object of desire and pursuit, is by the supposition a nonentity. It is *willed* for that very reason, that it is supposed not to exist. If it did exist, or had existed, it would be absurd to will it to exist or not to exist; and as a thing which does not exist, but which we will to be or not to be, it is a mere fiction of the mind, and can exert no power over the thoughts, nor influence the will or the affections in any way, except through the imagination. The future, whether as it relates to myself or others, exists only in the mind; and in the mind, not by memory, not by sensation, which are exclusive and selfish faculties, but by the imagination, which is not a limited, narrow faculty, but common, discursive, and social. If my sympathy with others is not a sensible substantial mechanical interest, neither is my self-interest any thing but an imaginary and ideal one, I am bound to my future interest only by the same fine links of fancy and reason, which give that of others a hold on my affections. As a voluntary agent, I am neces-

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sarily, and in the first instance, that is, in the metaphysical sense of the question, a disinterested one. I could not love myself, if I were not so formed, as to be capable of loving others. I have no solid, material, gross, actual self-interest in my own future welfare, and I therefore can only have the same airy, notional, hypothetical interest in it, which I must have in kind, though not in degree, in the pleasures and pains of others, which I get at the knowledge of and sympathise with in the same way. There is then no exclusive ground of self-interest, incompatible with sympathy, and rendering it a chimera; self-love and sympathy both rest on the same general ground of reason, of imagination, and of common sense.—It may be said, that my own future interests have a reality beyond the mere idea. So have the interests of others, and the only question is, whether the sympathy, the motive to action, is not equally imaginary in both cases. It may be said, that I shall become my future self, but that is no reason why I should take a particular interest in it till I do. If a pin pricks me in any part of my body, I am instantly apprised of it, and feel an interest in removing it; but my future self does not find any means of apprising me of its sensations, in which I can feel no interest, except from previous apprehension. Lastly, it may be said that I do feel an interest in myself and my future welfare, which I do not, and cannot feel in that of others. This I grant; but that does not prove a metaphysical antecedent self-interest, precluding the possibility of all interest in others, (for the social affections are as much a matter of fact, as the influence of self-love) but a practical self-interest, arising out of habit and circumstances, and more or less consistent with other disinterested and humane feelings, according to habit, opinion, and circumstances. I love myself better than my neighbour,

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for the same reason (and for no other) that I love my child better than a stranger's—from having my thoughts more fixed upon its welfare, my time more taken up in providing for it, and from my knowing better by experience, what its wants and wishes are. People have accounted for natural affection as an innate idea, as they have for self-love. According to the metaphysical doctrine of selfishness, my own child or a stranger's, and every one else, are equally and perfectly indifferent to me, as much as if they were mere machines. As to a paramount universal abstract notion of personal identity, impelling and overruling all my actions, thoughts, feelings, &c. to one sole object, and centre of self-interest, there is no such thing in nature. It requires almost as much pains and discipline, to make us attentive to our own real and permanent happiness, as to that of others. Is it not the constant theme of moralists and divines, that man is the sport of impulse, and the creature of habit? I would ask, whether the convivialist is deterred from indulging in his love of the bottle, by any consideration of the ruin of his health or business? Is the debauchee restrained in the career of his passions, any more by reflecting on the disgrace or probable diseases he is bringing on himself, than on the injury he does to others? It would be as hard a task to make the spendthrift prudent, as the miser generous. Man is governed by his passions, and not by his interest.—The selfish theory is founded on mixing up vulgar prejudices, and scholastic distinctions; and by being insisted on, tends to debase the mind, and not at all promote the cause of truth.

I do not think I should illustrate the foregoing reasoning so well by any thing I could add on the subject, as by relating the manner in which it first struck me. I remember I had been reading a speech which Mirabaud (the author of the work, called the System of

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Nature) has put into the mouth of a supposed infidel at the day of Judgment; and was afterwards led on by some means or other, to consider the question, whether it could properly be said to be an act of virtue in any one to sacrifice his own final happiness to that of any other person, or number of persons, if it were possible for the one ever to be made the price of the other. Suppose it be my own case—that it were in my power to save twenty other persons, by voluntarily consenting to suffer for them, why should I not do a generous thing. and never trouble myself about what might be the consequences to myself thousands of years hence? Now the reason, I thought, why a man should prefer his own future welfare to that of others, was, that he has a necessary, or abstract interest in the one, which he cannot have in the other, and this again is the consequence of his being always the same individual, of his continued identity with himself. The distinction is this, that however insensible I may be to my own interest at any future period, yet when the time comes, I shall feel very differently about it. I shall then judge of it from the actual impression of the object, that is, truly and certainly; and as I shall still be conscious of my past feelings, and shall bitterly repent my own folly and insensibility, I ought, as a rational agent, to be determined now by what I shall then wish I had done, when I shall feel the consequences of my actions most deeply and sensibly. It is this continued consciousness of my own feelings which gives me an immediate interest in whatever relates to my future welfare, and makes me at all times accountable to myself for my own conduct. As therefore this consciousness will be renewed in me after death, if I exist again at all—But stop——As I must be conscious of my past feelings to be myself, and as this conscious being will be myself, how, if that

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consciousness should be transferred to some other being? How am I to know that I am not imposed upon by a false claim of identity? But that is impossible, because I shall have no other self than that which arises from this very consciousness. Why then, if so, this self may be multiplied in as many different beings as the Deity may think proper to endue with the same consciousness, which, if it can be renewed by an act of omnipotence in any one instance, may clearly be so in a hundred others. Am I to regard all these as equally myself? Am I equally interested in the fate of all? Or if I must fix upon some one of them in particular as my representative and other self, how am I to be determined in my choice?——Here then I saw an end to my speculations about absolute self-interest and personal identity. I saw plainly, that the consciousness of my own feelings, which is made the foundation of my continued interest in them, could not extend to what had never been, and might never be, that my identity with myself must be confined to the connection between my past and present being, that with respect to my future feelings and interests they could have no communication with, or influence over my present feelings and interests, merely because they were future, that I shall be hereafter affected by the recollection of my former feelings and actions, and my remorse be equally heightened by reflecting on my past folly, and late-earned wisdom, whether I am really the same thinking being, or have only the same consciousness renewed in me; but that to suppose that this remorse can re-act in the reverse order on my present feelings, or create an immediate interest in my future feelings before it exists, is an express contradiction. For, how can this pretended unity of consciousness which is only reflected from the past, which makes me so little acquainted with

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the future, that I cannot even tell for a moment how long it will be continued, whether it will be entirely interrupted by, or renewed in me after death, and which might be multiplied in I don't know how many different beings, and prolonged by complicated sufferings, without my being any the wiser for it; how, I ask, can a principle of this sort transfuse my present into my future being, and make me as much a participator in what does not at all affect me as if it were actually impressed upon my senses? I cannot, therefore, have a principle of active self-interest arising out of the connexion between my future and present being, for no such connexion exists or is possible. I am what I am in spite of the future. My feelings, actions, and interests are determined by causes already existing and acting, and cannot depend on any thing else, without a complete transposition of the order in which effects follow one another in nature.

In this manner, Sir, may a man learn to distinguish the limits which circumscribe his identity with himself, and the frail tenure on which he holds his fleeting existence. Here indeed, "on this bank and shoal of time," we give ourselves credit for a few years, and so far make sure of our continued identity—as far as we can see the horizon before us, while the same busy scene exists, while the same objects, passions, and pursuits engross our attention, we seem to grasp the realities of things; they are incorporated with our imagination and take hold of our affections, and we cannot doubt of our interest in them. Farther than this, we do not go with the same confidence; the indistinctness of another state of being takes away its reality, and we lose the abstract idea of self for want of objects to attach it to. But the reasoning is the same in both cases. The next year, the next hour, the next moment is but a creation of the

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mind; in all that we hope or fear, love or hate, in all that is nearest and dearest to us, we but mistake the strength of illusion for certainty, and follow the mimic shews of things and catch at a shadow and live in a waking dream. Every thing before us exists in an ideal world. The future is a blank and dreary void, like sleep or death, till the imagiuation brooding over it with wings outspread, impregnates it with life and motion. The forms and colours it assumes are but the pictures reflected on the eye of fancy, the unreal mockeries of future events. The solid fabric of time and nature moves on, but the future always flies before it. The present moment stands on the brink of nothing. We cannot pass the dread abyss, or make a broad and beaten way over it, or construct a real interest in it, or identify ourselves with what is not, or have a being, sense, and motion, where there are none. Our interest in the future, our identity with it, cannot be substantial; that self which we project before us into it is like a shadow in the water, a bubble of the brain. In becoming the blind and servile drudges of self-interest, we bow down before an idol of our own making, and are spell-bound by a name. Those objects to which we are most attached, make no part of our present sensations or real existence; they are fashioned out of nothing, and rivetted to our self-love by the force of a reasoning imagination, (the privilege of our intellectual nature)—and it is the same faculty that carries us out of ourselves as well as beyond the present moment, that pictures the thoughts, passions and feelings of others to us, and interests us in them, that clothes the whole possible world with a borrowed reality, that breathes into all other forms the breath of life, and endows our sympathies with vital warmth, and diffuses the soul of morality through all the relations and sentiments of our social being.

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Such, Sir, is the metaphysical discovery of which I spoke; and which I made many years ago. From that time I felt a certain weight and tightness about my heart taken off, and cheerful and confident thoughts springing up in the place of anxious fears and sad forebodings. The plant I had sown and watered with my tears, grew under my eye; and the air about it was wholesome and pleasant. For this cause it is, that I have gone on little discomposed by other things, by good or adverse fortune, by good or ill report, more hurt by public disappointments than my own, and not thrown into the hot or cold fits of a tertian ague, as the Edinburgh or Quarterly Review damps or raises the opinion of the town in my favour. I have some love of fame, of the fame of a Pascal, a Leibnitz, or a Berkeley (none at all of popularity) and would rather that a single inquirer after truth should pronounce my name, after I am dead, with the same feelings that I have thought of theirs, than be puffed in all the newspapers, and praised in all the reviews, while I am living. I myself have been a thinker; and I cannot but believe that there are and will be others, like me. If the few and scattered sparks of truth, which I have been at so much pains to collect, should still be kept alive in the minds of such persons, and not entirely die with me, I shall be satisfied.

I am, Sir,
Yours, &c.
WILLIAM HAZLITT.

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